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MEMOIRS

OF THE

PUBLIC LIFE

OF THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX.

By R. FELL.

Carum esse civibus, bene de republica mereri, coli, laudari, diligi, est gloriosum.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1808.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD HOLLAND,

THESE MEMOIRS

OF THE PUBLIC LIFE OF

HIS ILLUSTRIOUS AND LAMENTED RELATIVE,

THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX,

ARE INSCRIBED,

IN A SINCERE AND RESPECTFULL ATTACHMENT TO HIS

CHARACTER AND PRINCIPLES,

BY HIS MOST HUMBLE AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

R. FELL.

PREFACE.

THE following pages, though more expressly devoted to the public life of Mr. Fox, may be considered as a narrative of the leading events of the history not only of this country, but of Europe and the civilized world, during the awful and eventful period in which that great statesman, and first of British patriots and orators, in modern times, flourished as a public man. The Author's idea, when he undertook this Work, and it has been abundantly confirmed in its progress, was, that a digest of the recorded opinions of Mr. Fox (even imperfect as they are, either through the negligence or the incapacity of newspaper reporters) would comprehend the discussion of almost all the great questions that have in any

ages engaged the attention, or divided the interests, of mankind. No person in the least acquainted with the proceedings of the British legislature for the last thirty years need be told, that there is scarcely any subject of importance on which Mr. Fox has not left something like a recorded opinion; and, in the judgment of the compiler of the sheets that follow, it was one of the most striking features in the intellectual character of that illustrious man, and in which he far excelled all his contemporaries, that though no orator ever scrutinized local and temporary politics with more acuteness and sagacity than he did, his opinions, divested of their particular reference, are applicable to any times and circumstances, and may be appealed to in all ages and countries as conveying the soundest precepts of moral and political wisdom.

In

In these times of political contest and debate, it would be impossible to give the Life of a man who divided so much the public judgment as Mr. Fox, without giving offence to some. From those who were the enemies of Mr. Fox's politics, when living, the Author of these Memoirs may naturally expect reprehension; but he to whom praise is almost wholly indifferent, cannot be supposed to feel much from censure. From the friends of Mr. Fox, he has indulgence to ask for a Work composed under many untoward circumstances, often in sadness of heart, and never without the humiliating reflection that the task he had undertaken was one that he wanted both talents and ease of mind to execute to his satisfaction. He has endeavoured to present the public with as much of the illustrious subject of his Memoirs, and as little of himself, as possible, and in this consists his whole

whole merit. He will not stoop to compare his own labours with those that have hitherto appeared on the same subject, which are not merely impositions on the public, but acts of cruelty to the memory of a great man. He dares not hope for praise; but venerating the memory of Mr. Fox in a degree which cannot be exceeded by those who were bound to him by the dearest ties of relationship and association, he should hold himself singularly unfortunate should a passage be found in his Work which could give offence to the most affectionate of his friends. This is the only offence that he fears to give, and the only censure that he dreads to receive. For the rest, he is fully sensible of the imperfections of his Work, and no one will rejoice more than himself (if the republic of letters is to receive that favour) to see it superseded by a more authentic publication from the

pen of that noble person to whom these Memoirs are inscribed, and who is so much better qualified, as well in point of talents as in every other respect, to supply that information which an obscure individual cannot be expected to afford.

London, December 4, 1807.

MEMOIRS,

&c. &c. &c.

THE right honourable Charles James Fox was the third son of Henry first lord Holland, by lady Georgiana Carolina, eldest daughter of the second duke of Richmond. He was born on the 24th of January 1749 O. S. which answers to the 13th of January according to the new computation. On his mother's side he inherited the blood of the Stuarts and of Henry of Navarre: on his father's his ancestors were respectable, but not noble. Sir Stephen Fox, the father of lord Holland, held several distinguished appointments at the court of Charles II, and was some time master of the horse to that monarch. He was a person of much piety, and of a noble and generous disposition. The churches of Farley in Wiltshire and Culford in Suffolk, which he rebuilt from the ground, remain monuments of the former; and his donation of above thirteen thousand

pounds to the military hospital at Chelsea, of which benevolent institution he was a zealous patron and promoter, is a striking example of the latter. Sir Stephen Fox, in 1703, married a second time, at the advanced age of seventy-six years, and had two sons, both of whom received the honour of the peerage, Stephen, the eldest, being created by George II earl of Ilchester, and Henry, the second son, lord Holland, by his present majesty.

Lord Holland was introduced early into public life, under the auspices of sir Robert Walpole, and soon distinguished himself for his readiness in debate, and knowledge of parliamentary business. In 1754 he was appointed secretary at war, and the following year was called to a seat in the cabinet, and raised to the post of secretary of state for the southern or foreign department. He continued, however, to hold this appointment but a short time, being displaced in the course of the year by Mr. Pitt, afterwards earl of Chatham. The commencement of the war, which began in 1756, was inauspicious; Minorca was conquered, and the glory of the British flag tarnished in the

unfortunate

unfortunate encounter which took place between Bing and De la Galissoniere in sight of that island. These circumstances exciting great discontent throughout the nation, the king, who *really* loved his subjects and *earnestly* consulted their happiness, wisely yielded to the voice of his people, dismissed the most unpopular of his ministers, and placed Mr. Pitt at the head of administration, though it is well known that statesman was personally obnoxious to him.

Mr. Fox's retirement from the sweets of office was not, however, of any long continuance, for the discontents of the nation being allayed by the execution of Bing, in every respect a weak and incapable commander, but certainly undeserving of the severe punishment inflicted on him, a coalition of parties was formed, and Mr. Fox was consoled for the loss of the seals with the subordinate but immensely lucrative post of paymaster-general of the forces. He continued in this office till the spring of the year 1763, when he was raised to the peerage; and, on the resignation of the earl of Bute, about the same time, finally retired from public life. The emoluments which lord Holland de-

rived from his office, served for many years to furnish a popular subject of declamation and invective; in a city address he was stiled, "the public defaulter of unaccounted millions;" the first body corporate in the kingdom denounced him at the foot of the throne as the worst of peculators, and, in a tone of remonstrance rather than of entreaty, demanded the sequestration of his wealth, and the removal of his name from the honourable list of his majesty's confidential advisers. It is but justice, however, to the memory of lord Holland to observe, that the reflections thrown on his character respecting his conduct while he held the office of paymaster, seem to have originated more in party animosities, inflamed by the spirit of a Junius, than any generous feeling for the public interest, or honest resentment at the malversation of the national treasures. Lord Holland, it has been admitted, created no new or extraordinary emoluments of office; the profits which he derived from his situation were such as were known and understood by all; such as his predecessors had enjoyed before him, without the slightest interruption or censure, and were forbidden by no law whatever. The only difference between

between lord Holland and his predecessors was, that he continued in office during the greater part of the most expensive war in which the nation had hitherto been engaged, a war in which upwards of eighty millions were expended, and consequently the personal emoluments of his post must have been greater than any former paymaster had enjoyed.

But these considerations are almost foreign to the design of this work. It is needless, and probably it would be thought ungrateful here, to enter into any minute delineation of the character of lord Holland as a public man. He had but few pretensions indeed to the character of a statesman in the enlarged sense of the term, and those pretensions, such as they were, he laboured so assiduously, through the whole course of his life, to absorb in the more profitable occupation of a courtier, that it would be difficult to form any accurate judgment of his capacity for the higher departments of government. His talents for managing the house of commons were certainly of the first order; but if this expressive phrase be allowed its full force, it is little praise to say, what is all that is implied by it, that he intrigued as suc-

cessfully as Mr. Harley, or corrupted as happily as sir Robert Walpole. He lived and acted in times of a passive mediocrity of talents and events, and his capacity was well suited to such times and the associates with whom he acted.

But whatever were the errours of the political life of lord Holland, no man most assuredly ever discharged the duties of a father with superior, probably none with equal, tenderness and affection. A warmth and enthusiasm that it would be difficult to describe, entered into his attachment for his children, and animated all his views respecting them. No intrigues of state, nor any business of office, were ever permitted to divert his attention from the important task he had fondly imposed on himself of superintending their education. Charles James, the illustrious subject of these memoirs, was his favourite from his infancy. His father early perceived in him strong indications of a powerful and commanding genius, and anticipating the future value of his mind, neglected no means to improve and ripen his opening talents.

It was a maxim which lord Holland invariably pursued,

pursued, to assist and follow, but in no case whatever to circumscribe or restrain, the perfect exercise of their free-will in his children. The various eccentricities of his infancy and youth, which early stamped with the bold features of originality the character whose improvement he had most at heart, were uniformly treated by him with unbounded indulgence. The utmost latitude of his pleasures, and even of his projects and his whims, never, perhaps, in a single instance, occasioned an exertion of paternal authority. His lordship, it has been said, could advise, importune, and even condescend to stipulate, but never ventured to command his favourite son.

From his earliest youth, the infant statesman was encouraged to deliver his sentiments with freedom on all subjects, and without restraint in all companies. His first indications of thought and ingenuity were sedulously cherished, and what ever could interest his heart, charm his imagination, or improve his understanding, happily selected, and occasionally thrown in his way for that purpose. This naturally produced a habit of thinking with freedom, and speaking with readi-

ness, at all times and in all places, and probably contributed not a little to that facility of comprehension, and quickness at reply, for which Mr. Fox was afterwards so pre-eminently distinguished in the house of commons.

The public is already in possession of many anecdotes of the early life of Mr. Fox, for of no public character has more been written, nor was any man ever more warmly praised by his friends, or more bitterly censured by his enemies. To transcribe all the anecdotes that we have seen of Mr. Fox's early life, would rather impose on the patience, than gratify the curiosity, of our readers. Many of the anecdotes to which we refer it would be impertinent to repeat; some are trifles that do not deserve to be remembered; and others seem to have little foundation in probability or truth. The authenticity of the following we believe to be indisputed, and, though they have long been familiar to the world, it would be somewhat like a breach of trust to omit them in a page like this.

The father of Mr. Fox having resolved to take down

down the wall at the bottom of the lawn before Holland house, and to have iron pallisades put up in its stead, that the passengers on the road might enjoy a better view of that fine antique building*, it was necessary to make use of gunpowder to facilitate the work. Mr. Fox had promised his son Charles that he should be present whenever the explosion took place. Finding that the workmen had completed its fall without giving him notice, he ordered the wall to be rebuilt, and when it was thoroughly cemented had it blown up again for the gratification of his favourite. At the same time he recommended it strongly to those about him, never, upon any account, to be guilty of a breach of promise to children, justly observing, that by so doing they instilled into them an indifference with regard to the observance of their own promises when they arrived at years of maturity.

* Holland house, Kensington, formerly belonged to the earls of Warwick; it was built by cardinal Wolsey; and was the residence in which the immortal Addison drew his last breath.

One night lord Holland, when secretary of state, in the midst of the war, having a number of important expresses to despatch, took them home from his office, in order to examine their contents more attentively before he sent them away. Charles, then about eight years old, came into the study, to which he had free access, and taking up one of the packets, which his father had examined and set apart for sealing, he perused it with much seeming attention for some time, then expressed his disapprobation of the contents, and threw it into the fire. The secretary, far from being ruffled by this incident, or attempting to reprimand his son, turned immediately to look for the office copy, and with the utmost composure and good humour made out another.

The invincible passion for gaming, which accompanied Mr. Fox for so many years of his life, and was a source of such infinite vexation to himself, and concern to his friends, as well as a perpetual subject of sarcastic animadversion for his political opponents, is generally supposed to have had its rise in the following circumstance.—At the

the age of fourteen, Mr. Fox accompanied his father to Spa, at that time a place of fashionable resort of the most distinguished characters from all parts of Europe. Here it is said that lord Holland excited in his youthful mind a passion for play, by allowing him five guineas a night to be spent in games of hazard.

Preferring a public education to private tuition, as more suitable to his future destination, lord Holland sent his son first to Westminster school, and afterwards to Eton. The celebrity which distinguished his progress in the acquisition of classical learning, at Eton college, where he is said to have mastered every task and science by a kind of intuition, procured him an immediate and decided superiority in every class that he joined. Dr. Bernard, then provost of the college, had never occasion to censure, but often recommended him to the imitation of his fellow students, and particularly pointed out his manner of performing his usual exercises as singularly original and exemplary. His private tutor, while a member of this celebrated institution, was Dr. Newcomb, afterwards bishop of Waterford, and archbishop

of

of Armagh, the metropolitan see of the Irish church, who, while he was frequently vexed at the dissipation of his pupil, had occasion, at the same time, to be highly gratified at his uncommon proficiency in every branch of learning. The ardour of his genius, and the quickness of his mind, always made him rise superiour to those obstacles, which pleasure threw in his way. It was observed of him, even then, that he was never satisfied with mediocrity in the execution of any thing he undertook: his levities were as bold and extravagant, as his scholastic attainments were masterly and unrivalled.

At this period too, he was remarkable for the soft and compassionate qualities of his heart, and early and feelingly demonstrated his supreme attachment to all the tender sensibilities of humanity, by uniformly espousing the cause of the weak and friendless, in all the little various contentions and disputes that occasionally interrupted the harmony of the youthful community in which he moved. He is said to have instituted with equal address and good nature, a sort of municipal jurisdiction, where the aggressors were regularly

regularly arranged and tried; where rules, or laws of conduct, were established and maintained; and where his maiden eloquence was frequently and happily exerted in the behalf of justice, mercy, and benevolence. Such brilliant ebullitions of genius, and so amiable a developement of character, did not fail to impress the contemporaries of his youth and the companions of his studies with the most favourable conceptions of his abilities, and a strong conviction of his future eminence. The present earl of Carlisle, so justly celebrated for his classical taste and poetical abilities, who was Mr. Fox's fellow student at Eton, early felt and acknowledged the superiority of his friend, and, in the following elegant copy of verses addressed to him, which reflect the highest credit on his penetration, foretold the honours of his maturer years:

How will my Fox, alone, by strength of parts,
Shake the loud senate, animate the hearts
Of fearful statesmen! while around you stand
Both peers and commons listening your command;

While

While Tully's sense its weight to you affords,
His nervous sweetness shall adorn your words.
What praise to Pitt, to Townshend e'er was due,
In future times, my Fox, shall wait on you.

From Eton Mr. Fox went to Oxford, where he was equally distinguished for the brilliancy of his parts, the extent of his attainments, the vivacity of his conversation, and the dissipation of his manners. Constitutionally attached to every species of pleasure, and in possession of unlimited means of gratifying his inclinations, he entered deeply into all the excesses of youth. But his love of pleasure occasioned no interruption in the progress of his studies. While at Oxford, he is said to have read nine or ten hours every day, for the whole term; devoting his nights with equal assiduity to pursuits "more honoured in the breach than in the observance of." His vacations were usually spent in town, and devoted, with his usual spirit and avidity, to every superfluity and excess; but he could always disengage himself at will, and, with a mind superior to the charms of luxury, or the fascinations of pleasure, returned regularly to college, and resumed his studies

studies with unremitting eagerness and severity.

Mr. Fox's literary attainments would have done honour to the most indefatigable scholar. His classical acquirements were extensive and profound, not merely those of a pedant, but of a man of exquisite taste and feeling. "Who," says a polite and elegant anonymous writer, who wrote of him before he had reached the zenith of his fame, "has not been surprised at the pertinence and force of his fine and numerous quotations from the most difficult and illustrious authors of antiquity; his striking allusions to their picturesque descriptions and romantic imagery; his various references to their popular opinions and usages; his profound acquaintance with the most remote and intricate periods of their history; and his minute attention to every specific modification of their civil and political institutions?"—Mr. Fox was extremely partial to the study of the Greek writers: Longinus and Homer were his favourite authors. With the latter he was particularly conversant, and retained through life a perfect knowledge of the Greek tongue. He had studied

the

the father of heroic poetry not only as a man of refined taste and a philosophical critic, but he had examined, with the eye of a grammarian, the beauties and defects of his style and versification. The following anecdote may serve to shew how familiarly he was acquainted with the works of the Ionian bard. "A clergyman, eminent for his knowledge of the Greek language, was one day endeavouring to prove, that a verse in the Iliad was not genuine, because it contained measures not used by Homer. Mr. Fox instantly recited twenty other verses of the same measure, to shew that deviation from the usual feet was no evidence of interpolation. He was indeed capable of conversing with a Longinus, on the beauty, sublimity, and pathos of Homer; with an Aristotle on his delineations of man; and with a pedagogue on his dactyls, his spondees, and his anapaests. Such was the universality of his genius, that he could meet men of the most extensive knowledge, on at least equal terms, in their peculiar departments of science."

After a residence of no long continuance at Oxford, but remarkable for his close application to

to the opposite and seemingly irreconcileable pursuits of pleasure and learning, Mr. Fox obtained permission from his father to visit the continent. At this period the continent must have presented a highly interesting spectacle to the mind of a philosophical traveller. If public prosperity was not at its height, if some things were wanting to complete the happiness of nations and individuals, there was still much in the aspect of public affairs to gratify and console the attentive observer, and the future augured still more favourably for the general interests of humanity. The peace concluded between England and France early in 1763, had speedily been followed by a general pacification, and various circumstances seemed to promise a lasting continuance of the public tranquillity. The disposition of the court of France was decidedly pacific; the enmity so long subsisting between the houses of Austria and Brandenburg was almost worn out, and Maria Theresa and Frederic the Great, now both grown old under a succession of wars which tended only to exhaust their dominions, were mutually anxious to give repose to their subjects. Holland was in a state of decrepitude indeed,

but not of absolute abasement; the renown of her former greatness served as a substitute for her present want of power. The Austrian Netherlands were in a flourishing condition; and Germany, through her hundred states, under the prospect of a permanent peace, was rapidly recovering from the multiplied disasters in which she had been involved on account of quarrels foreign to her interests. In the south of Europe, Italy had enjoyed a peace, with very slight interruptions, of between thirty and forty years continuance; but the people, under arbitrary and impolitic forms of government, had not reaped all the benefits they ought to have derived from the auspicious state of their affairs. The extravagance of their governors, the ignorance of their nobility, and the incessant demands of a numerous, indolent, and rapacious priesthood, joined to an universal corruption of manners, prevented them from enjoying the advantages of their situation.—On the whole, however, the kingdoms and states which I have passed over in rapid review, wore the visible appearance of ameliorated times; and the mild aspect of the political sky, in proportion as it promised a continuance of the blessings of

tranquillity,

tranquillity, dispelled the mists of national jealousies, inclined the continental powers to harmonize cordially together, to forget their former prejudices and antipathies, and to seek by mutual concession and good offices, to conciliate their mutual convenience and interest. It was a period of returning confidence, and the nations of the continent were forward in their several advances to meet the good opinion of each other.

All the old governments of Europe were then in the plenitude of their splendour and authority; and with the different forms of society, and diversity of civil institutions, which had existed for centuries, and every where presented themselves to his view, must have afforded subject of profound reflection to the vigorous and comprehensive mind of Mr. Fox.

Few of the particulars of his tour have transpired; but it is impossible to conceal, that his indulgence in all the follies and excesses, so incident at that period to a British youth of family and fortune, far exceeded all bounds of moderation, and obliged his father to recal him before he had

visited Rome. Mr. Fox is said to have obeyed the parental mandate with great reluctance, and not until it was oftener than once repeated. A writer who seems to have been well acquainted with the private character of Mr. Fox says, "We can easily imagine how susceptible his heart must have been to the fascinating charms of French vivacity, and, at the same time, how very natural it was for one of his temper to swallow the intoxicating draughts of Italian luxury. Whether it was the splendour of foreign courts, the festivity of select societies, the power of beauty, the charms of science, or the delirium of the gaming table that arrested him, is uncertain; but it was not until after the most earnest and pressing importunities, both from his father and friends, that he determined on returning to England. The extreme prodigality and extravagance imputed to him, and the vast debts which he is said to have contracted in almost every capital on the continent, are among the innumerable desiderata in his story, to which no facts, yet offered to public investigation have afforded any thing like a satisfactory solution. And, since no panegyric would be decent or sufferable, as little censure ought to be

expected

expected or admitted, without the most circumstantial and positive evidence."

At this period, singular as it may appear to those who have not seen the anecdote, and only recollect the plain and simple dress which distinguished Mr. Fox during the latter years of his life, he was a beau in the most extravagant acceptation of the term, and aspired to the praise of leading the fashions in the article of dress. In point of *red heels, Paris cut velvet,* and other fopperies of a similar description, he vied with the most egregious coxcombs of the age. These and similar qualifications he displayed at most of the courts of Europe which he visited in the course of his tour; and it was said of him, "that if he did not return like his maternal ancestor, Charles II, with all the vices of the continent; he at least brought back a wardrobe replete with all its fashions."

The same circumstances which had determined lord Holland to recal his son from the continent, now determined him to place him in the house of commons. Lord Holland, who had studied the world and human nature with much attention and

success, was no stranger to the real character of his son, or the lively and impetuous nature of his passions. A seat in the house of commons, he wisely foresaw, would open new projects of ambition to his aspiring inclinations, unite him to a variety of new connections, accustom his mind to the detail of business, draw forth into exercise the extraordinary faculties which he knew him to possess, and probably detach from those ruinous pursuits, so unworthy of his talents, to which, with the excusable eagerness of youth, he was too warmly addicted. Nor was it unreasonable to suppose, from the uncommon ripeness of his understanding, the force of his genius, and the taste and sensibility of his nature, that political pursuits would henceforth so entirely engross his talents, and be found so congenial to his disposition and feelings, as to leave him neither inclination nor leisure to associate with companions less respectable, or bestow any share of his attention on pursuits less noble.

With these views lord Holland procured a seat for his son, for the borough of Midhurst, in Sussex, at the general election in 1768. Mr. Fox

was

was then only in the nineteenth year of his age, and consequently by law, ineligible; but, no notice being taken of this circumstance, either through a wilful or accidental oversight in the committee of privileges, and in the speaker of the house of commons, he took and retained his seat without interruption.

Little more is known now of his early parliamentary speeches, than that he espoused the cause of that party which his better judgment led him afterwards to condemn, and was the strenuous oppugner of those rights, which he afterwards became the most eloquent and impassioned vindicator and advocate of. Mr. Fox's first speech was upon the petition of Mr. Wilkes, from the King's Bench prison, praying "that he might be allowed to satisfy the solicitude of his constituents by attending his duty in parliament." The petition was opposed by administration, whose conduct upon this occasion was defended by Mr. Fox with much energy and animation. His debût was regarded as extremely promising. His mode of speaking was perfectly original, and unattended with any of the hesitation or embarrassment of

youth. He entered into the argument with a spirit and decision, a solidity and penetration, which fully ascertained his competency to speak on the subject, and would have done honour to the most practised and experienced senator.

Not only was no notice taken of his incapacity to sit in the house on account of his nonage, but he gained very perceptibly on his auditors by every speech he made, and soon became a favourite with both sides of the house. There was a propriety and vigour, says an author to whom we have more than once already had occasion to offer our acknowledgements, a manliness and majesty in what he said, which it was impossible for impudence to confront, or sophistry to withstand. His wit, his irony and invectives, were not more poignant and forcible than his candour was striking, his reasoning perspicuous, his application fair, and his manner liberal and unaffected. He never rose, as most juvenile orators do, in the midst of a warm dabate, merely to expose their own vanity, and insult the patience of the house. He never repeated his lesson like a schoolboy, or exhibited a deplorable imitation of any eminent speaker,

speaker, or obtruded a dull farago of common-place remark on his honourable auditors, while their sensibility was roused by the importance of the question, or the eloquence it occasioned. He never exhausted one half of his speech in apologizing for the other, or lost the attention of the house by bestowing his own on any thing that did not deserve it. In such a popular assembly, where so many able speakers are always on the watch to stand up, it requires no little prudence for a young orator to fix on the precise time when his observations will have the best effect. Mr. Fox always spoke as genius and occasion prompted; but never seemed desirous of preventing any member's taking the precedence, nor once fatigued, disgusted, or hung on the ears of, his auditors. His orations, for the most part, were the spontaneous effusions of his own noble mind, delivered without any affectation of superior attention to the subject, without the least mixture of pride or supercilious dogmatism, or any apparent consciousness of those unrivalled merits, which even his antagonists must have allowed him to possess. As a proof of the estimation and reverence in which his powers were held, it has been observed,

observed, that he never offered himself to the speaker's eye when he was not equally acceptable to the whole house, nor opened his mouth but the most profound silence ensued.

It has already been mentioned that Mr. Fox entered parliament as a zealous supporter of the measures of the court; nor must it be concealed, that he defended all the odious, unpopular, and unconstitutional proceedings respecting Mr. Wilkes and the Middlesex election, which at this period occupied so large a share of the public attention. Some years afterwards (in 1780), when his political opinions had received a more enlightened bias, he was accused by Mr. Dundas, then lord advocate of Scotland, with having abandoned the sentiments he had held respecting the Middlesex election, and he was charged with having formerly maintained, *that the people had no legal or constitutional voice but in the house of commons.* Mr. Fox's reply was an admirable apology for the early errours of his political life. He denied having ever made use of the expression imputed to him by the lord advocate, who, as he was not then a member of the house, could speak from report alone,

alone, and was excusable only because he did not know whether he was right or wrong. No man then in the house could have so wantonly misrepresented his words. In the second or third speech he had ever made in his life, and while he was only one-and-twenty years of age, expressions loose and undefined might undoubtedly escape him; but was it candid, or just, or manly, to examine such expressions with rigour? Was he the only one likely to be injured by a precedent so contrary to the usuage of parliament? Was an assembly of British senators the only society of gentlemen in which no allowance was to be made for the inadvertence of youth, or the warmth of debate? Were a man's settled habits of thinking to be known only from a single sentence, uttered at a time when his judgment could not be very mature, and at least long enough ago to render the recollection of it extremely imperfect and precarious? Not that he had any objection to submit every assertion he had ever made to an impartial scrutiny. He only wished his language might be accurately stated, and that gentlemen not then in parliament would not condemn him on the vague accounts of newspapers or other faulty

sources

sources of information. He appealed to every one who had heard him on that occasion, whether, in the opinion he gave concerning the Middlesex election, he did not build the whole of his argument upon the power of the people. Every topic he had urged was founded in this great constitutional principle, which he then maintained, as he had always done, in direct opposition to the influence both of the crown and the other branch of the legislature. He certainly said, *the voice of the people was to be collected, in that house;* but not as the erroneous report of the day had added, that *it could not be collected in petitions.* Such an expression as this could not fall from him; it would have been as inapplicable as unjust. There was not then any petition before the house, nor any matter in agitation which could lead to such a discussion, or occasion a reference to such a subject. It had ever been his opinion, that *the voice of the people* was always to be heard within those walls, except when a majority of their representatives acted in the most notorious and palpable contradiction *to the voice of the people* in their original capacity. In all ordinary cases, it was certainly the most practicable and expeditious

mode

mode of declaring their meaning; but, when the representative body did not speak the genuine sense of their constituents, the people themselves had a constitutional right of announcing it in whatever form they deemed most eligible and efficient. This had ever been, and would still be, his opinion.

The parliamentary abilities which Mr. Fox displayed, at the very outset of his career, recommended him so strongly to the attention of ministers, that early in February 1772, he was made one of the lords of the admiralty, and lord North, the then premier, who beheld his talents with astonishment, and regarded his personal virtues with the warmest attachment, treated him with unreserved confidence and friendship. The minister was of a character singularly calculated to attract the regards of a young man like Mr. Fox. His abilities, though not of the first rank, were far above mediocrity; his knowledge of business was extensive, and his integrity unimpeached. All the social virtues entered largely into his nature; his manners were conciliating

and

and attractive; his temper was mild, equable, and pleasant; and his wit ready and felicitous*.

It is probable, however, that Mr. Fox was more attached to the man than to the minister; and it has been said, that his manly and upright mind, at an early period of their connection, disapproved of many measures, to which all the persuasion and influence of his noble friend and tutor could not fully and uniformly reconcile him. On account of some difference of opinion, which it would now be a fruitless task to endeavour to

* The author of "Circumstantial Details of the long Illness and last Moments of Mr. Fox," speaking of his connection with lord North, says, "It always appeared to me that Mr. Fox had a very lively regard for lord North, as he never mentioned him but in a strain of eulogy. He said, that he was the most accomplished wit he had ever known; and in domestic life, in the circle of his friends and followers, when collected at his table, had all the candour, without the grossness, of Walpole. He appeared as if he never felt an insult, so immediately did he forgive it. His face was very plain, and his features coarse, but his smile was heavenly. You could not see him without becoming attached to him. He left all his cares and arts in the house of commons, and was no longer a minister than whilst on the treasury bench."

elucidate

elucidate, Mr. Fox retired from the admiralty board soon after his appointment; but the minister, unwilling to lose his support, prevailed on him to resume his situation; and, eager to preserve and cherish his attachment, pronounced a warm eulogium on his political abilities, as adding not only strength, but doing honour, to the ministerial arrangement. As a proof of the sincerity of this declaration, Mr. Fox was removed from the admiralty to the treasury in the month of December the same year, on the first vacancy which occurred at that board.

The appointment of Mr. Fox to a seat at the board where lord North presided, seemed to promise a permanent connection between him and the minister; and, as it was the nature of Mr. Fox, as it is of every liberal mind endowed with the genuine principles and feelings of probity and honour, to be warm and resolute in all his attachments and aversions, his support of administration, while he approved their measures, was spirited and decided. When his arguments were objected to, under the idea that holding an appointment from the crown, he could not be supposed

posed to follow the unbiassed dictates of his own judgment, he frankly acknowledged his obligations to government in assigning him the place he possessed, but steadily denied his acceptance of it as the purchase of his services. He hoped no man would suspect, that, because he received a share of the public money, it was his duty to controvert those measures in parliament to which he had already assented in private, or that his independence was in the smallest degree affected by a staunch vindication of what he solemnly avowed were his genuine convictions.

By this mode of reasoning, he silenced, in some measure, the clamours and imputations of his opponents, and established his reputation in the house for manliness and firmness of character. One of his earliest opponents, and whom he had the spirit and discernment to single out as an adversary with whom a contest, however abortive in the issue, could not be disgraceful, was Mr. Burke, then in the meridian of his powers, and the avowed leader, in the house of commons, of that numerous and patriotic body of whigs, distinguished by the name of the Rockingham party.

But

But nothing of the animosity or virulence of political controversy entered, at this period, into the contentions of these great men. Mr. Fox was always ready to treat the merits of Mr. Burke with that eminent and respectful distinction to which he thought them entitled; and that illustrious orator, in his turn, as constantly treated Mr. Fox, as one for whose rising talents he had the highest regard, and with whom he might yet act on a more generous and intimate footing.

But while Mr. Fox supported the general measures of lord North's administration, he by no means resigned his right of judging for himself on questions unconnected with the acts of government; accordingly, when sir William Meredith presented a petition to the house of commons, signed by some hundreds of the clergy of the established church, praying to be relieved from the obligation of subscribing the thirty nine articles, Mr. Fox supported the petition with all the powers of his eloquence, and divided with the minority in its favour. On a subsequent occasion, during the same session (1772), he supported a motion for the enlargement of the toleration

act, which passed the house of commons with a large majority, but was lost in the upper house in consequence of the pertinaceous opposition of the court lords and the bench of bishops.

In these instances Mr. Fox followed the enlightened and liberal dictates of his own mind, fearless of the displeasure of the minister, or the more secret and deadly resentment of the court. The period was fast approaching, when the excellence of his character was to be displayed in its native and genuine lustre, and the rectitude of his heart to rise superior to the trammels of ministerial influence, and the prejudices of early habit and connection.

A variety of causes have been assigned for the rupture which took place between Mr. Fox and the minister, and ended in the dismission of the former from his seat at the board of treasury. It has been supposed and urged with great plausibility, that Mr. Fox, conscious of his vast superiority over all his competitors, was dissatisfied with the subordinate appointment he held, and looked up to a station of consequence and responsibility

sponsibility more worthy of his acknowledged talents. Lord North had flattered his ambition with the hopes of a seat in the cabinet; but, in proportion as his claims to that distinction became better founded, the minister shewed less inclination to gratify his wishes, or realize those high expectations which he had himself raised and encouraged. Lord North probably dreaded the introduction of a coadjutor into the cabinet, whose abilities he viewed with jealousy, and whose independent spirit he could not hope to govern. On the other hand, it has been asserted, that Mr. Fox's disappointment did not originate with the minister, but in the secret power then lodged behind the throne, which guided the reins of government, and was the fruitful source of all those misfortunes which afterwards fell so heavily on the nation. Those who maintain this opinion, argue very rationally, " that had the minister acted entirely from himself, his own discernment must have taught him that no purchase was too high for a character, whom he could neither keep without honour, nor lose without danger. One, at least, of very inferior sagacity, might have easily foreseen, that in proportion as he was serviceable

as a friend, he would also be formidable as an enemy. But the interior cabinet, despairing of being able, in every instance, to bend him to their purpose, and not finding him that pliant and passive tool which their dark despotic edicts required, took the rash and abortive resolution of annihilating his consequence, by putting an abrupt and immediate end to his official existence."

For some time previous to the dismissal of Mr. Fox, a considerable degree of coolness prevailed between him and the minister. Some trivial appointment which he solicited was refused, in direct violation of the customary privileges annexed to the place he then occupied; and the minister, by his reserved and distant behaviour, shewed clearly that his confidence was withdrawn. But the ostensible cause of his dismission originated in the following circumstances.—The speaker of the house of commons having been grossly insulted by one of the daily newspapers, concerning an inclosure bill, then pending in parliament, a formal complaint, in his behalf, was laid before the house. The member with whom the business originated alledged, that very

very unwarrantable and indecent liberties had been taken with sir Fletcher Norton, who then filled the chair; that whatever affected him was an indignity to the house; and that the author or authors of such a malicious libel deserved an exemplary punishment. An order of the house was consequently issued against Woodfall, the printer of the Public Advertiser, in which paper the obnoxious article had appeared, who readily attended, and gave up his author. This appeared to be the reverend Mr. Horne, better known since by the name of Tooke, and justly celebrated for his philological attainments and ardent attachment to the cause of freedom, who attended at the bar of the house, and vindicated himself with his characteristic ability and acuteness; but the evidence proving defective, Mr. Horne was discharged, and the displeasure of the house, perhaps with some increase of acrimony, reverted to the printer. Mr. Fox moved that he should be committed to Newgate; but the minister, to avoid a dispute with the city which in a former instance had involved the house in so unpleasant a dilemma, only proposed to commit him to the Gate-house. The consequences of this misunderstanding were, that

the ministerial party was divided, and the original motion, for committing the printer to the custody of the serjeant at arms, was carried by a large majority.

This proceeding gave great offence to lord North. It seemed a dereliction, on the part of Mr. Fox, from that implicit and unequivocal obedience, to which the minister undoubtedly thought himself entitled, more especially from the members of his own board. Some trivial explanation took place, which, however, far from producing a reconciliation, only ended in mutual recrimination. An open rupture between the parties was now inevitable, and, in a few days, Mr. Fox was made acquainted with his disgrace at court, by the following laconic billet; which, with marked rudeness, it is said, was delivered to him, while seated in his place on the treasury bench, by one of the door-keepers of the house of commons:

"*His majesty has thought proper to order a new commission of the treasury to be made out, in which I do not perceive your name.*

"*NORTH.*"

"*To the Hon. C. J. Fox.*"

This abrupt and offensive dismissal took place early in 1774; but whatever feelings of private indignation it might have excited, in Mr. Fox's mind, it produced no very immediate or palpable alteration in his parliamentary conduct. He continued to vote with administration for some time, though he seldom spoke in their favour; nor was it until the unhandsome manner of his removal had become a matter of public notoriety that he seceded from the treasury bench, and placed himself on the opposite side of the house. His motive for this forbearance may, perhaps, be traced to an amiable and pious unwillingness to disturb the declining days of his father by an open and avowed dissent from those principles of public conduct to which lord Holland had steadily adhered through life, and which he had anxiously laboured to cultivate in his son, as the readiest and surest course to power, emolument, and honours. Some respect was undoubtedly due from Mr. Fox to the opinions and partialities of a parent, who had treated him with such unbounded indulgence and affection, and to whom he was attached by so many endearing and irresistible obligations. Could he, in whose heart all the charities of human nature were

closely interwoven, and whose disposition, to the last moments of his life, retained all the gentleness, benignity, and kindness, of infantine feeling, without any mixture of the moroseness of philosophy, or the arrogance of superior attainments, be censured that he halted between the stern dictates of public duty and the tenderer, but not less powerful, claims of filial gratitude?

The demise of lord Holland, which happened in the summer of 1774, released Mr. Fox from the embarrassment here alluded to, and left him at full liberty to pursue the enlightened conclusions of his own judgment. Accordingly he withdrew himself from the mercenary herd of ministerial adherents, and threw all the weight of his great talents into the scale of opposition. A brief sketch of the state of parties, at this period, and of the views and politics of the court, will best serve to elucidate the principles which, from this time, appear to have governed Mr. Fox's public conduct.

No prince ever succeeded to the British throne under happier auspices than George III; but, to speak

speak with the freedom of history, none ever so completely disappointed the vernal promise of his reign. Born and edu cated in England, an advantage which neither of his predecessors possessed, the king, in his first address to the great council of the nation, gloried in the name of Briton; and assured his loving subjects, that their civil and religious liberties were equally dear to him with the most valuable prerogatives of his crown. The war in which he found the nation involved at his accession, was prosecuted with success, and terminated in an advantageous treaty of peace. The condition of affairs at home was highly flourishing; and the commencement of the new reign was rendered popular, at a cheap expense, by an act of parliament which made the judges independent of the crown.

But, in a short time, the nation perceived, with infinite chagrin, that a system of policy was adopted by the court, totally different from the enlightened and liberal principles which had recommended the house of Brunswick to the choice of the people. The popular ministers, with the great Pitt at their head, were dismissed, to make way

way for the advancement of the earl of Bute, a nobleman of a contracted capacity and arbitrary views, who was supposed to possess an unlimited influence over the mind of the king. This pernicious influence continued to sway the royal breast long after the minister had ostensibly retired from public affairs, and in it originated all those evil and disastrous measures, which finally covered the nation with irretrievable calamity and disgrace. An eloquent and distinguished writer *, whose means of information were abundant, and whose sentiments were adopted by some of the ablest and most independent characters of the country, speaking of the system of the court about the period to which we allude, says, "To secure to the court the unlimited and uncontrouled use of its own vast influence, under the sole influence of its own private favour, has, for some years past, been the great object of policy. For the future, court and administration were to be considered as things totally different. By this operation, two systems of administration were to

* Mr. Burke, "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents."

be

be formed; one which should be in the real secret and confidence, the other merely ostensible, to perform the official and executory offices of the state. This *court faction* proceeded gradually, but not slowly, to destroy every thing of strength which did not derive its principal nourishment from the immediate pleasure of the court. *Mettre le roi hors de page* became a sort of watch-word; as a foundation of their scheme, the cabal have established a sort of *rota* in the court. All sorts of parties by this means have been brought into administration, from whence few have had the good fortune to escape without disgrace. In the beginning of each arrangement *, no professions of confidence and support are wanting to induce the leading men to engage. But while the ministers of the day appear in all the pomp and pride of power, while they have all their canvas spread

* During the first six years of his majesty's reign, the high offices of the crown were occupied by five succeeding sets of ministers: it may likewise be observed, that the Rockingham administration, which possessed the soundest claims on the confidence and affection of the people, was the one whose duration was the shortest.

out

out to the wind, and every sail filled with the fair and prosperous gale of royal favour, they find, *they know not how*, a current which sets directly against them, which prevents all progress, which even drives them backwards. That the *cabal* may be enabled to compass all the ends of its institution, its members are scarcely ever to aim at the high and responsible offices of the state. They are distributed with art and judgment through all the secondary, but efficient, departments of office, and through the households of all the branches of the royal family. If an attack be made upon one of this corps, immediately he flies to sanctuary, and pretends *to the most inviolable of all promises*. Conscious of their independence, they bear themselves with a lofty air to the exterior ministers. Like Janissaries, they derive a kind of freedom from the very condition of their servitude. They may act just as they please, provided they are true to the ruling principle of their institution. The name by which they chose to distinguish themselves, is that of the *king's friends*. The whole system, comprising the exteriour and interiour administrations, is commonly called, in the technical language of the court, *double cabinet*—in French

French or English, as you choose to pronounce it."

With such a system, impure at the fountain head, and saturated with corruptions and abuses through all its various conduits, a man of Mr. Fox's temper was naturally at enmity; honest and sincere himself, he despised ambiguity and disguise in others; and was, of all the statesmen that existed in his time, the least calculated to shine in a divan where

Ladies interpose and slaves debate.

It has already been stated, that Mr. Fox supported all the ministerial proceedings on the Middlesex election; proceedings the more dangerous and odious, as they were well known to have originated in a personage whose breast should have been inaccessible to individual resentment:—that he lent his general aid to administration from his introduction into parliament in 1768, until some time after his dismission from office in February 1774. It is worthy of remark, however, that, during this period, the claim of the British legislature

legislature to tax America, which afterwards produced such heavy calamities, and was the source of so much unavailing regret, was never once formally and exclusively discussed in parliament, so that, whatever were the faults of Mr. Fox's early political opinions, he had no share in, and afforded no countenance to, those fatal and preposterous measures which ended so unhappily in the dismemberment of the empire. The stamp act, which first excited the discontent of the colonies, was enacted in 1764; and the honour or demerit of that measure rested solely with Mr. George Grenville, a minister whose littleness of mind Dr. Johnson has sarcastically pourtrayed by observing, "that he possessed talents not universally afforded to mankind; for had he gotten the Manilla ransom, he could have counted it." This project of taxing America, and drawing a revenue from thence in aid of the British exchequer, was received with so much just indignation by the colonists, that after some fruitless attempts to carry it into execution, the obnoxious act was repealed by the Rockingham administration in 1766, not, however, without the violent opposition of the *king's friends*, to gratify whom *a declaratory act* was

was passed, and received the royal assent at the same time, asserting the power and right of Great Britain to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever.

This assertion of a mere abstract right produced at first little disaffection in America, and would probably soon have been forgotten, had it remained, as prudence would have directed, a dead letter in the statute book; but scarcely were the discontents in America allayed by the repeal of the stamp act, when a new project was brought forward to draw a revenue from the colonies *without giving them offence.* A bill was passed in 1767, imposing certain duties on glass, tea, paper, and painters' colours, imported from Great Britain into the colonies, by which the right of internal taxation was allowed to be virtually relinquished, while the claim of external taxation was affirmed still to remain in full force. When intelligence of this new plan of taxation reached America, mercantile combinations were immediately formed, not to import any of those articles on which the new duties were laid; the Americans compared these duties, which were trivial in themselves, to

an entering wedge, designed to make way for others which would be greater and heavier; and so strenuous was the opposition to them, that one of the first acts of lord North's administration, in 1770, was the repeal of those duties, excepting the duty on tea, which was intentionally omitted, on the avowed principle of asserting the supremacy of Great Britain. The minister was strongly urged by some of the best informed and most intelligent members of the house of commons, to adopt the genuine principles of conciliation, and not to prolong the contention when he relinquished the revenue; but he replied, in a style too much approved of at court, the insolence or futility of which we know not whether most to condemn, "that a total repeal could not be thought of till America was prostrate at our feet*."

Language

* The great king of Prussia has left on record, in very explicit and remarkable terms, his sentiments respecting the infatuated conduct and policy of the British court in relation to America. "England," says this enlightened sovereign, "at this period had involved herself in a war with her colonies, *undertaken in the spirit of despotism, and conducted in that of folly.* It was the Scotchman Bute who still governed

Language like this coming from the confidential advisers of the crown, and supported by the whole

verned the king, and directed the councils of the kingdom. Like one of those malignant spirits who are perpetually talked of, and never seen—he enveloped himself in profound darkness, whilst, by means of his secret instruments and emissaries, he moved the whole political machine at his pleasure. His system was that of the ancient Tories, who maintained the unlimited power of the crown to be necessary to the public welfare. Haughty and harsh in his deportment, little solicitous as to the selection of the means which he employed in the accomplishment of his purposes, his obstinacy could only be exceeded by his indiscretion. A civil list of one million scarcely sufficed to gratify the venality of parliament. The English nation, degraded by its sovereign (*dégradée par son souverain même*), appeared to have no will separate from that of the court. But, as if this was not enough, lord Bute engaged the king to attempt an arbitrary taxation of the American colonies, at once to augment his revenues, and to establish a precedent which might, at a future time, be imitated in Great Britain. The Americans, whom the court had not deigned to corrupt, opposed themselves openly to these imposts, so contrary to their charters, their customs, and to the liberties which they had enjoyed uninterruptedly from their first establishment. A wise government would have hastened to appease these

whole phalanx of the court party, necessarily produced much irritation and discontent in America; and

growing troubles, but the British ministers acted upon other principles. The rigour and violence of their proceedings completed the alienation of the Americans. A congress was convened at Philadelphia, in which it was determined to shake off the English yoke; and from this time we see Great Britain engaged in a ruinous war with her own colonies. France, the perpetual rival of England, saw with pleasure these civil commotions, and secretly encouraged the Americans to defend their rights against the despotism which George III was desirous to establish, by holding out to them a prospect of future succours."—*Œuvres de Frederic III, tome IV.* It may be amusing to contrast the sentiments of the king of Prussia with those of the deputies of the Oneidas and other Indian nations, who thus addressed themselves to congress on the same subject: "Brothers! we have heard of the unhappy differences and great contentions between you and old England. We wonder greatly, and are troubled in our minds. Brothers, possess your minds in peace respecting us Indians. We cannot intermeddle in this dispute between two brothers. The quarrel seems to us unnatural. You are two brothers of one blood; we bear an equal affection to both. Should *the great king apply* to us for aid, we shall deny him; if the colonies apply, we shall refuse. *We Indians cannot find or recollect in the traditions*

of

and the rising animosities between the two countries were farther increased by the impolitic proceedings of the American governors, who, indebted for their offices and emoluments to the favour of the crown, entered zealously into all the despotic schemes of the ministry, and in many cases were the original movers, and, in all, the active abettors, of severe and coercive measures. It never appears to have entered into the minds of these miserable politicians, that the Americans were a people warm in their attachment to liberty, the

of our ancestors a case similar to this. Brothers, were it an alien that had struck you, we should look into the matter. We hope through the wise government and good pleasure of God, your distresses may soon be removed, and the dark clouds be dispersed. Brothers, as we have declared for peace, we desire you will not apply to our Indian brethren for assistance. Let us Indians be all of one mind, and you white people settle your disputes betwixt yourselves."—It would have been happy for humanity had the Indian nations uniformly adhered to this wise policy ; but many of the northern tribes were prevailed on to take up *the hatchet* in behalf of the *great king*, and, before the successes of general Gates put a stop to Burgoyne's expedition, were guilty of every ferocity authorised by their savage mode of warfare.

descendants of a race of men eminent for their love of independence, who fled from Europe to enjoy their civil and religious rights unmolested in the wilds of America. The spirit which pervaded America, the great Chatham declared to be the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship-money in this country; the same spirit which roused all England to action at the revolution, and which established our liberties on the basis of that great fundamental maxim of the constitution, that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent.—"You may no doubt destroy their cities," said this illustrious senator; "you may cut them off from the superfluities, perhaps the conveniences of life; but, my lords, they will still despise your power, for they have yet remaining their woods and their liberty. What though you march from town to town, from province to province, though you should be able to enforce a temporary and local submission, how shall you be able to enforce the obedience of the country you leave behind you, in your progress of eighteen hundred miles of continent animated with the same spirit of liberty and of resistance!"

Mr.

Mr. Fox could not have heard such noble sentiments as these on one side, and the insolent, supercilious rodomontade of office on the other, which represented the gallant and free spirited population of America as neither disciplined nor capable of discipline, and so indisposed to encounter danger, that their numbers would only add to the facility of their defeat, without feeling a presage of the melancholy consequences that were likely to ensue, should Great Britain obstinately persist in enforcing her claim to tax the unrepresented colonies. His first opposition to the court measures was on the subject of the Boston port bill, and the disfranchisement of the colony of Massachusetts bay, which came under the consideration of parliament in the spring of 1774, in consequence of the open resistance which the inhabitants of Boston had made to the invidious tea duty. Even at this early stage of this unhappy contest, his enlightened mind foresaw the evils that were likely to result from it; and with prophetic sagacity he predicted, that the measures which administration were pursuing would prove, in the event, more sanguinary than the proscriptions of Sylla, and could terminate only in the

slaughter of their fellow subjects and the ruin of their country.

From this period Mr. Fox took an active share in all the debates and proceedings of the American war; ably and eloquently advocating the rights of the oppressed colonists; and exposing with intuitive discernment the blunders and mistakes of administration. The band of illustrious patriots whom he joined in opposing the despotic measures of the court were at first few in number, but strong in talents, integrity and reputation. In the upper house they could boast of the support of the earl of Chatham, who, though sinking under the weight of years and infirmities, exerted himself with all the energy of youth in defence of the sacred principles of liberty and humanity; by the side of this venerable statesman were to be found the marquis of Rockingham, a nobleman adorned with every private and public virtue; lord Camden, a name never to be mentioned but with respect and gratitude; the dukes of Grafton and Portland, lord Shelburne and other peers of independent character and sound political principles. In the house of commons the foremost ranks in the

the opposition were occupied by Mr. Burke, colonel Barré, and Mr. Dunning, men very different in their powers, but all endowed with exquisite talents: in florid declamation, or what may be called the picturesque of eloquence Mr. Burke surpassed Mr. Fox, but in close, unsophisticated argument Mr. Fox was greatly his superiour; colonel Barré excelled in repartee, his eloquence was feeling and pathetic, and occasionally aspired to grandeur of sentiment; and Mr. Dunning was a profound and logical reasoner, who thought and argued with an enlargement of mind rarely to be met with in men of his profession; but neither of these orators possessed that comprehensiveness of intellect which distinguished Mr. Fox, and led him to predict almost literally the ruinous consequences which ensued from the pernicious measures he opposed.

The grand principle on which Mr. Fox opposed the American war was its injustice; that the British parliament had no right to levy a tax on the Americans, and that resistance on their part was justifiable. His sentiments on this head were explained in a few words, he said, he trusted the

descendants of Englishmen could never be at a loss what part to act, whenever the question was—Whether a people ought to be slaves or free men? On the subject of American independence he alleged, that independence had been tacitly prescribed to the colonies by every measure adopted against them, and was the only mode in which, for their self preservation, we had left them any option. He urged the excessive rigour of the several restrictive statutes that had passed against them, and the various means pursued to reduce and subjugate them; and defended their conduct by our own example against James the second. When that unfortunate and ill advised monarch meanly abandoned the kingdom, the English came to an immediate decision that the throne was abdicated, and chose another king. "Our oppressions," said he, "have dissolved every tie of civil society in America, and thrown the whole continent into anarchy and uproar. They consequently declare the government to be abdicated, and reclaim the privilege of appointing another."

One of the leading artifices by which the American war was carried on, was, that it originated with

with parliament; and parliament, for that reason, was bound in honour to bring it to an issue; this argument was strongly urged by the ministerial adherents and the king's friends, and like all arguments more addressed to the pride and passion of a popular assembly than its understanding, met with far too favourable a reception in parliament. But there were not wanting some moderate and intelligent men, who thought that the question of the expediency or policy of carrying on the war with America might be determined by the experience of a campaign or two: either that the raw levies in America would be found incapable of facing the king's veteran soldiers; or, if they could not carry their measures at the point of the bayonet, that his majesty's ministers would wisely and prudently retrace their steps, and seek to recover the friendship of the colonies by acts of grace and conciliation. The moment it became evident that the plan of extracting a revenue from America by force was impracticable, Mr. Fox addressed himself to this class of politicians, and, on their own principles, claimed their support to put an end to the calamities of war. Subsequent facts proved his reasoning to be unanswerable.

" The

"The antipathies and resentments," said he, "which our hostilities and oppression have inspired the people in that, against the government of this country, their infinite and inexhaustible resources, the strong probability of their assistance from Europe, and the formidable preparations they have made for resistance, infallibly destroy all hopes of our ever being able to effect a tax in America. These are circumstances which can scarcely fail to flash conviction on the minds of the most strenuous assertors of the supremacy of parliament. How gross, then, and inexcusable, the absurdity of still prosecuting schemes of subjugation, notwithstanding the completion of such schemes is thus evidently and utterly impracticable,—from the situation of the country, the temper of the inhabitants, and the distance of our armies from the seat of war,"—Guided in his judgement by his persuasion of these facts, Mr. Fox at this period (November 1777) predicted the fate of the northern army under general Burgoyne, and almost literally anticipated the disgraceful failure of the Canadian expedition.

When

When intelligence of the convention of Saratoga arrived in England, and that a British army, which, at its departure from Canada, consisted of above ten thousand men, had been obliged to lay down their arms and surrender at discretion, Mr. Fox, in a strain of the most poignant satire, animadverting upon the cabinet plans of policy for a series of years past, and the remedial measures adopted by the executive power to heal the disorders of the state, stigmatized the minister as "a political Sangrado. Bleeding was his only prescription for all ills. Should mortal symptoms appear in the body politic in consequence of this regimen, still this state empiric will persist in crying out for more blood, merely because he has staked his reputation on the assertion that this is the only effectual remedy."—

On another occasion, early in 1778, when the house had resolved itself into a committee on the state of the nation, Mr. Fox in a luminous and comprehensive speech entered at great length into a retrospective view of the whole conduct of administration respecting America, including as well the measures which led to war, as the manner

in

in which it had been prosecuted. He laid it down as an incontrovertible axiom in politics, that, when a country, within the short space of a few years, exchanges the highest state of prosperity for extreme adversity, the government of it must have been radically erroneous. The unfortunate and dishonourable progress of the American war proved on what a wretched and mistaken policy it was founded. He warned the house of the danger of exhausting our stores and military strength on an object that plainly appeared to be impracticable, and at a time when every circumstance prognosticated the hostile intentions of our neighbours. Upon this ground he moved as a resolution of the committee, "that an address should be presented to his majesty, beseeching his majesty that no part of the national force in these kingdoms, or in the garrisons of Gibraltar or Minorca, should be sent to America." No debate occurred on this motion, but on the question being called for, it was negatived on a division by a majority of 259 to 165, the largest minority that had yet appeared in opposition to the war.

When lord North brought forward his second plan

plan of conciliatory propositions, Mr. Fox gave them his support, but at the same time clearly foretold that they would be rejected by the Americans. He was certain that the colonies would never treat with the ministry, or the creatures of a ministry whom they detested, and that all overtures were now too late, as they had an immediate prospect of opposing our exertions with the whole power of France. "The minister," he said, "had attempted a justification of the most unjustifiable measures which had ever disgraced any government or ruined any country. But his arguments might be collected into one point, his excuses comprised in one apology—in one single word —IGNORANCE: a palpable and total ignorance of every part of the subject. He hoped, and he was disappointed—he expected a great deal, and found very little to answer his expectations—he thought America would have submitted to his arms, and they defeated them—he made conciliatory propositions, and he thought they would succeed, but they were rejected—he appointed commissioners to make peace, and he thought they had powers; but he found they could not make peace, and that they had not sufficient powers."

Had

Had the present concessions been offered in time, Mr. Fox said, they would undoubtedly have been successful; for, however obscure his former propositions of conciliation might be deemed, necessity, had at length compelled the noble lord to speak plain. But what censure would be found sufficient, he asked, on those ministers who had adjourned parliament in order to make a proposition of conciliation, and then neglected to do it until France had concluded a treaty with the united and independent states of America, and acknowledged them as such? He did not speak from surmise, he said, he had it from authority he could not question, that the treaty he mentioned had been signed at Paris ten days before. The minister being closely pressed on this point, at length reluctantly acknowledged, "that it was but too probable such a treaty was in agitation, though he had no authority to pronounce absolutely that it was concluded." This was animadverted upon as a very extraordinary circumstance, that the intelligence of a private member of that house should be sooner received, and more authentically ascertained, than that of the government. In the upper house, lord Weymouth,

secretary

secretary of state, "denied all knowledge of such a treaty, or that he had received any authentic information of its being either in existence or contemplation." Nevertheless, within a very few days after this extraordinary declaration, the priority and superiour accuracy of Mr. Fox's information was demonstrated by a royal message, in which the king informed the two houses, "that a rescript had been delivered by the ambassador of his most christian majesty, containing a direct avowal of a treaty of amity, commerce, and alliance, recently concluded with America; in consequence of which offensive communication on the part of the court of France, his majesty had sent orders to his ambassador to withdraw from that court; and, relying on the zealous support of his people, he is prepared to exert all the force and resources of his kingdoms, to repel so unprovoked and unjust an aggression."

At this alarming crisis, the dangers and difficulties of the nation were manifestly increased by the utter incapacity of the king's servants to apply the vast resources entrusted to their management with

with wisdom. Mr. Fox who had protested successively against all the hostile measures directed against the colonies, now arraigned the conduct of ministers in the prosecution of the war, and traced all the calamities and disgrace that had befallen the nation to their incapacity and folly. All their plans of action, he asserted, were pregnant with irremediable mischief, and their whole system of policy so extremely bare, that the misfortunes which it seemed chiefly calculated to produce were uniformly and distinctly foretold. Predictions, which, for a series of years, were as regularly justified by the event, as announced in the most positive and explicit language. The facts stated were indisputable, and could not have originated but in the grossest mismanagement.

In reply to these allegations, it was industriously propagated by the ministerial adherents, both in and out of parliament, that all our want of success, and every particular disaster resulting from the war, were chargeable to those in opposition, and that the strength of government had been broken, its measures impeded, and its operations

operations defeated, by the struggles of party. Such a preposterous mode of attacking opposition, as it did not deserve, seldom received, a serious answer. It was generally and justly treated as a contemptible insult on common sense, utterly unworthy of notice, and proceeding only from the incorrigible folly or wilful malignity of the subaltern mercenaries of the court. But on one occasion Mr. Fox condescended to reply to it, and inflicted a severe and merited chastisement on the servile band by whom it was propagated, applying to them a happy parody on a striking passage from Gulliver's Travels.—" I can bear them, " said he, " well enough in some respects, and even make allowance for their ignorance, incapacity, folly, corruption, love of place, emolument, and power. I can even pity them for their wants, their impotence, and their gross stupidity. I feel for their miserable infatuation, not knowing whether to rush headlong on immediate ruin, or retreat with safety. Despicable and unprincipled as they are, I have nevertheless learned to regard their persons with respect. But, when such men, thus involved, and involving others in every possible misfortune

and disgrace, urge their claims of merit for what deserves an ax or a halter, and, under a complication of great national calamities, coolly contend that those disasters, which every individual feels, do not exist, or, if they do, that they ought justly and safely to be imputed to opposition. Such a lump of deformity and disease, of folly and wickedness, of ignorance and temerity, thus deeply and incurably smitten with pride and distended by audacity, breaks all measures of patience."

On another occasion, when the lord advocate of Scotland (Mr. Dundas), affirmed with unblushing effrontery, that the cause of all the political embarrassments of the country was to be traced to the inflammatory speeches of the opposition, Mr. Fox readily took up the accusation, and in a matchless strain of indignant eloquence disproved the charge.—Had he, whose inflammatory harangues concurred in bringing parliament and the nation into those distresses which were thus confidently attributed to those who had done every thing in their power to prevent them; had he, whose inflammatory harangues

harangues dragged government, step by step, from violence to violence, in that unfeeling inhuman system of blood and massacre, which every honest man must detest, every wise man condemn, and every good man abhor; had he, who dealt in nothing but exaggeration, expressions of asperity and vindictive virulence, in incitements to revenge, and all the horrid monsters which follow in their train; had this man the assurance to impute the guilt of such measures to those who had all along, in each successive stage of its progress, foretold the consequences, prayed, entreated, and supplicated, not so much for America as for the credit of the nation and its ultimate safety and welfare, to arrest the hand of power, inflamed by rage and directed by injustice, plunging into scenes of indiscriminate slaughter, and to pause but a moment, and, after balancing every possible prospect of gain with certain inevitable loss, a loss of national reputation, of national justice, of national humanity, weigh the effects, and then proceed! Has not the patient, who spurns at the prescription of the physician, an equal right to tax him with the inveteracy

of a disease which becomes incurable only from his own obstinacy.

During the whole progress of this iniquitous and abominable contest with America, Mr. Fox uniformly exerted his transcendent talents in defence of the genuine maxims of the British constitution, and the unalienable franchises of the human species. Had his career terminated at the conclusion of the American war, he would still have left behind him a sufficient stock of well-earned fame to have ranked his name on an equality with the most illustrious statesmen of any age or country. It was his nature never to shrink from the free investigation of any question that came under his discussion; but boldly to trace the most intricate and abstract questions to their original principles. Hence, though no orator entered with more acuteness into the detail and interest of passing events, many of his speeches are distinguished from those of the most able of his contemporaries, in that the opinions he delivered were not only admirably adapted to local exigences and casual circumstances, but applicable to any times or contingencies of human affairs.

As

As an example of this, and many will occur in the course of the following pages, we subjoin his profound and masterly observations on the controuling powers of the legislative bodies, which formed the introductory part of his speech to a motion of censure (March 3, 1779,) on the conduct of the earl of Sandwich, who then, very unworthily, presided at the board of admiralty. They rest on constitutional grounds which no modifications of circumstances can weaken, and, like the essence of truth, the principles on which they are founded are immutable.

"The most prevalent opinion," said Mr. Fox, "is, that, where the whole national strength and resources are vested in a single person, or a few, all the functions of government, especially in time of war, are performed with greater facility and despatch. Secrecy, which is the life of counsel, is then preserved inviolate, and the vigour of exertion only bounded by the abilities of the state. Thus expedition, which constitutes the most advantageous circumstance in almost every enterprize, is secured. The blow is often struck, and the necessary precautions taken, before the

cause transpires, and the power and wisdom of government acquire popularity and applause from the successful effects of their measures.

" Nothing can be more absurd than to expect the same convenience in popular governments. Here the political machine depends on such a complication of springs, that no single hand can touch it into harmony and effect. The general movements, of this curious system, result from such a variety and combination of subordinate and distinct principles, as must unavoidably render them sure but slow, more regular, perhaps, but less vigorous, and liable to abortion or defeat, either from the knowledge or interference of the public.

" This speculative proposition is incontestible. The advantages, notwithstanding, of an arbitrary, are greatly overbalanced by those of a free government. No society is constituted solely for war. It would be imprudent not to provide against such a contingency, but absurd to make it the exclusive object of every civil institution. In this respect, therefore, free are infinitely preferable

preferable to despotic states. The latter seem modelled, only with a few exceptions, to circumstances of hostility, the former are chiefly calculated for times of peace. These more effectually protect men in their persons and properties, encourage and stimulate the exertions of individuals, call forth and occupy talents in the public service that might otherwise be lost in obscurity, assist the enterprizes of trade and commerce, inspire the love of our country, and countenance a spirit of honest independence. No modification of society can be altogether free from inconvenience, but that is certainly the best, on the whole, which puts every man as nearly on a level as possible, by subjecting all equally to the same laws. This happily combines every member of the society in one common interest, and creates a personal, as well as public, pride, which, when properly directed and judiciously restrained, is the strongest incitement to magnanimity and glory.

" These are some of the advantages and disadvantages which, in theory, are generally annexed to governments, where the whole power is lodged

in the hands of one man, and those constituted upon the broad basis of public freedom. On this subject, however, the language of experience is very different from that of speculation. And it will be found, in fact, that the arts of peace have not been uniformly more successfully cultivated in republican states, nor those of war in countries purely arbitrary and despotic. No nations have been more generally successful in war than those in which the whole body of the people had a share in the public councils. And none have oftener failed than such as totally excluded their least interference in the administration of state affairs. The ancient republics of Greece and Rome exemplify this observation in all its latitude. And this country will remain an everlasting monument of the prosperous and almost irresistible exertions of a mixed government. It is obvious at least, from the whole tenor of our history, that even our hostile enterprizes were only successful in proportion as planned and executed in the true spirit of the constitution. Both Holland and Switzerland may also be quoted as a proof that *no form of government is so well calculated*

calculated for the happiness of its subjects, for internal prosperity and external strength, *as that in which the sovereignty is delegated from the people, and exercised by the executive power, under their cognizance and controul.*

"In our government, the legislative and executive powers being separate and distinct, the crown and its ministers are conditionally vested with as much authority as is necessary for the discharge of the trust committed to their care. They have the prerogative of making peace or war, entering into alliances, incurring expenses, and adopting every measure, which the terms of their trust can be supposed to imply, in the fullest and most ample manner, on this single condition, *that they are answerable to parliament for their conduct.* Nor can they act negligently, corruptly, or traiterously, but at their peril, and at the hazard of their fortunes, lives, and honour. The ministers of despotism are subject to no such controul. And, though subject to the same vices and imperfections as other men, their only object is to square their conduct by his inclination who

who has the sole power to reward or punish them as he pleases. Having no accounts to settle with the public whom they oppress or betray, if they are able to flatter a weak prince into a favourable opinion of their services, or persuade a wicked one that their incapacity is the effect of zeal for his person, and an implicit obedience to his commands, they are sure, though execrated through the whole nation, to be honoured and caressed at court.

"How far the doctrine of a free government's retaining a dernier controul over the executive power, is applicable to the constitution of this country, demands the particular attention of parliament. It is a matter intimately connected with the present debate. What is this controul, but that inquisitorial power, vested in the house of commons, which no gentleman can deny, and which has been so beneficially and successfully exercised on many former occasions? It fairly amounts to this. We confide in administration for effecting such purposes as can be better accomplished by the few than the many. It is a trust,

a trust, however, strictly and purely conditional. We, who delegate, reserve a right of resuming the power whenever we perceive our expectations frustrated or our confidence abused. And want of ability or integrity, in most cases, equally disqualify the parties entrusted, and subject them to punishment or removal. Parliament may forbear the exercise of this great and necessary prerogative, but we cannot relinquish it. The constitution has interwoven it so essentially with the very existence of this house, that it is the chief circumstances which gives weight and decision to our deliberations and resolves. And the obligations we owe to the public authorize and impel us to exercise it, either by removing or impeaching such as are culpable. Wicked and weak counsellors are proper objects of dismission, in the first instance; and of condign punishment, upon a legal and constitutional investigation, in the second. Parliament stands between the people and executive powers of the crown, and it is only through this great constitutional medium the former can properly seek, or legally obtain, redress for the injuries of the latter."

In

In the disputes which arose between admiral Keppel and sir Hugh Palliser, relative to the memorable engagement with the French fleet off Ushant on the 27th of July, 1778, Mr. Fox warmly supported the cause of admiral Keppel, to whom he was attached both by public principles and the ties of consanguinity, and he had the satisfaction to find that his conduct was sincerely applauded by the nation at large. His most celebrated speech on this extraordinary business was made some time after the trials of the rival commanders, when ministers, as if anxious to measure their strength with the indignation of the people, and to add insult and contumely to the unspeakable wrongs they had brought on them, appointed sir Hugh Palliser, a man convicted by an honourable and competent tribunal of having preferred an unfounded and malicious accusation against his commanding officer, to the lucrative government of Greenwhich hospital. This shameful prostitution of an honourable appointment, which in all former instances had been conferred as the reward of distinguished services, roused the indignant resentment of Mr.

Fox,

Fox, and gave birth to one of the most masterly orations ever delivered within the walls of the house of commons.

Mr. Fox began his speech with observing, that it was not his custom to apologize much for the several matters of public importance which he deemed it his duty occasionally to lay before the house. With all his confidence in the indulgence of the house, he felt peculiar diffidence in entering on the subject of his motion. Two individuals were deeply concerned in what he had to state, but he solemnly declared that his conduct proceeded from no personal or private motives whatever*.

—" I thank God," said he, " there is not a human being against whom I am conscious of harbouring the least dislike. It is not my incli-

* The speech which follows may be considered as a true portrait of the suavity of Mr. Fox's temper, and the unwillingness with which he allowed personal feelings to interfere with his public conduct.

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nation or manner to work secret antipathies into public accusation, or to indulge my own resentments under the pretext of prosecuting national advantage. I can assure the honourable gentleman (sir Hugh Palliser), whose name I must inevitably and frequently mention, that against him and his majesty's ministers I entertain no other sentiments of disrespect, than the injuries, which their misconduct has done this country, unavoidably excite.

" But I cannot cherish those regards, which are nearest my heart, without sincerely detesting, and treating with invariable indignation, those who, by their factious and mutinous mode of acting, are the notorious instruments of our national ruin and dishonour. Private enmities I disclaim, as abhorrent to my habits and my nature; but public enmities, instigated and confirmed by repeated public delinquencies, by what the community feels from their treachery to whose management her concerns are committed, and by the obstinacy of a few operating to the manifest destruction of all-enmities it is not less my pride

to

to avow than it is my duty to indulge. The evils entailed on our devoted country, hold up the author and authors of them as the objects of universal aversion, in proportion as the virtues of public spirit are not extinct. With the governor of Greenwich hospital I never had any civil intercourse or connection in my life. It was never in his power, probably never in his inclination, to cross or thwart me in any pursuit whatever. But his pernicious interference with the substantial good of the kingdom, affects me as I regard her welfare, and raises my partialities for her interest as I perceive her injured. Has not this man, by harbouring the worst of designs, and indulging the fellest passions, essentially circumscribed those exertions that were most likely to effect our deliverance, and almost ruined that service on which our last hopes depended? The dreadful train of calamities, which naturally falls in the rear of such a breach of public trust, at the same time that we deplore the consequences, awakens our resentment against the cause. On this account, and this alone, I profess and avow myself, the public enemy of the honourable gentleman, the public

enemy

enemy of the feuds he has sown in his majesty's navy, and the public enemy of all who abet and support him.

"I think it also my duty, on this occasion, though from very different reasons, to disavow the influence even of private friendship on my public conduct. It has been my endeavour to feel, as I wish only to act, for the public. Not that my heart is so void of a partiality so amiable, so honourable, and so interesting. God knows, I consider my intimacy and connection with this great and amiable, but much-injured character, as one of the most valuable and respectable privileges of my life. But my honourable relation needs not my assistance. His own glorious and immortal conduct has established his reputation. His personal and professional virtues have all been tried, and have stood the test: let those, who have foully attempted his honour and his life, attest this truth. They know what he is, and what he can do, and it is his worth only which galls them. Was he not attacked, betrayed, criminated, and arraigned, on an accu-

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sation the most serious and awful? Did he shrink under the imputation to which he was subjected, or fall a victim to the power and malevolence of his conspirators? No: he endures the ordeal with honour and fortitude, and derives new lustre from the gloom that surrounded him. Were not the constituents, whom he had served with integrity for several successive parliaments, and who, till then, were always happy in his virtuous and arduous struggles for the public good, insidiously diverted from his support, and, by their preference of another, betrayed into a scandalous desertion of their own interest? But ministers and their emissaries had not long to brood over the success of their contemptible manœuvres, when the whole county of Surry gave the lie to their short-lived triumph. They saw with indignation the oppression to which his virtues alone had exposed him; they saw the enormous influence of the crown exerted to suppress an honest and undesigning reputation; they saw simplicity, independence and merit, contending in an unequal conflict with art and malignity in possession of place and power! Notwithstanding all the odium,

raised and propagated to his prejudice, they revered his singular virtues and stamped them with their choice. Thus oppression, as it always will in a free country, produced its opposite effect. My honourable relation, in being driven from his old friends, in Windsor, through the contemptible influence of court intrigue, is honourably returned, to serve in parliament, by one of the most respectable counties in the kingdom. He therefore stands too high in fame and enjoys too much substantial glory, to require any additional support, or to render my serving him any motive in the present business.

"It is improper, it is dangerous, perhaps it is criminal, in these critical times, when unanimity seems so necessary, so desirable, especially in our fleets and armies, to agitate a matter which has pretty much subsided, and the revival of which must renew old animosities, and create much dissension, and ill blood. These fatal consequences, so pernicious to the state and so advantageous to the foes of Great Britain, I foresee, and lament and deprecate as sincerely as any man can

can do. *Non movere quieta* is a maxim to which I entirely subscribe. Be therefore all that black catalogue of ills, which must result from the dispute, on their heads whose impertinent temerity would not suffer it to sleep. I wash my hands of every consequence with which it can be charged. Ministers by appointing sir Hugh Palliser governor of Greenwich hospital, have broached the subject, and are answerable for all the inconvenience to which a fresh altercation of it is obnoxious. They have dragged him from that obscurity to which the indignation of his country had driven him, and must atone for all the evils that can ensue.

" The motion I shall have the honour of submitting to the house, is grounded on this appointment, which strikes me as a gross and wanton insult on the honour of his majesty's navy. What man, who feels as a gentleman, can be happy in the service of his country, or serve with that zeal and spirit from which alone the navy of England has gained its greatest reputation, while a station of high distinction, and

hitherto assigned only to those of the most unsullied characters, is thus given to a man convicted of having preferred a malicious and ill-founded accusation against his commanding officer.

"The appointment of sir Hugh Palliser to be governor of Greenwich hospital, considered in all its circumstances, is a measure of so much criminality, so incongruous to the sense of the nation, so glaringly iniquitous and absurd, that I scarcely know how to argue it, or by what mode of reasoning or form of expression to heighten the impression which the bare fact must already have made on the mind of every unbiassed member of parliament. Like an axiom in geometry, it stamps conviction at once, and admits of no additional evidence to corroborate its certainty. The only way left me, to discuss the subject, is, therefore, by supposing objections, and by opposing to those objections such arguments as appear to me conclusive."

Mr. Fox then entered into a long train of argument to prove, that the court martial which tried

tried admiral Keppel was perfectly competent to declare its sentiments on the motives of the prosecutor, and brought forward several precedents to shew, not only that they had an undoubted right to censure sir Hugh Palliser, but that such was the uniform usage of court martials in all similar cases. He vindicated the court martial from all suspicion of having acted under the influence of improper motives, and passed an elegant eulogium on the character of naval officers in general. "If," said he, "any profession of individuals be better qualified to judge of the nicest points of honour than another, it is undoubtedly the military; and, if ever I am brought to give one profession the preference, as men of sincerity, I shall certainly think the naval branch entitled to that preference. The military, generally residing in great cities and populous towns, imbibe all the manners of the times; and, as a division of the army is always attendant on the court, and makes part of the royal pageantry, they are naturally accustomed to a more courtly and accommodating mode, both of acting and speaking, than other men. But naval officers are,

in some degree, secluded from the world; and, by living on the boisterous element, where every sort of attention to order and discipline is essential even to existence, and having no personal intercourse with courts or princes, are remarkable for a roughness of manner, and bluntness of integrity, which prompt them on every occasion, to act without fear and speak without disguise."

After contrasting the characters of admiral Keppel and sir Hugh Palliser, and taking a luminous review of all the proceedings which had emanated from their disagreement, Mr. Fox concluded his speech with an animated appeal to the candour and integrity of the young members of the house. "The motion I have made," said he, "aims only at fixing a censure on an appointment which, in my judgment, materially affects the public service and the public interest. It is necessary to send it down to posterity marked with this public disapprobation, not only to prevent these pernicious consequences, but to preserve the dignity and consistency of parliament, to check the presumption of other malicious minds in similar

similar situations, and to annex to courage and generosity their natural reward. I plead the cause of injured honour; and appeal to you, from the conviction that the highest sense of honour always glows in youthful bosoms. That manly independence of mind which is the brightest ornament of our rational natures, is generally in its strength at your time of life. You are most likely to act from the genuine dictates of your own hearts, without servilely embracing the opinions of other men. And I now give you an opportunity of signalizing your attachment to the fairest virtues, put in competition with the vilest and blackest passions, of the human heart. The vote of this night must decide the public opinion of your principles and characters. I renew my protestation against being under any species of private influence whatever in my present conduct. I have acted in this, as I wish to do in every other, matter, entirely from the impulse of public duty, and am ready to abide the consequence."

This motion, however, like many other patriotic

measures proposed by the same enlightened senator, was lost through the domineering influence of that corrupt and profligate faction, which supported government in all its despotic proceedings, and pertinaceously opposed whatever tended to expose the misconduct of ministers. But notwithstanding the discouraging circumstances under which Mr. Fox and the band of Whigs with whom he acted maintained their opposition, this good resulted from it, that while the minister was supported in the house of commons by large and triumphant majorities, the public was made acquainted with the folly and demerit of their rulers, and their voice, in the end, loudly and firmly expressed, produced the dismissal of an administration the most hostile to their interest, and actuated by maxims and principles the most illiberal, unjust, and tyrannical, that it was the misfortune of any nation ever to groan under.

As no man contributed more largely to this event than Mr. Fox, so no member of parliament ever laboured more assiduously to inform his countrymen at large of the extent of their rights

rights and privileges than he did. Ministers were disposed to shelter themselves under the sanctuary of prescription and authority; to avoid the discussion of all abstract questions; and to suffer their conduct to be measured by no other standard than the dry and tedious forms of office and precedent. The same reasons which induced ministers to decline the examination of abstract propositions, disposed Mr. Fox to urge their discussion. He was desirous that the people of England should be informed of the full extent of their rights, of the encroachments that were made on their freedom, and the wrongs of which they were the undesigning instruments against their fellow citizens in America.

He characterized the American war as commencing in an arbitrary and odious spirit of domination on the one hand, and a gallant and resolute determination on the other to withstand every lawless extension of authority. It exhibited, in its uniform progress, he said, a most inveterate and well-supported struggle, between the principles of despotism enforced by an army of disciplined

ciplined troops, and the rights of humanity defended by a whole continent of freemen, united, animated, and stimulated by the enthusiasm of genuine liberty. Such a war was too wicked to be prosperous. Indelible infamy attended it in every stage, and it was destined, more or less, to become the curse of every individual who could prostitute his talents for the accomplishment of a purpose so hatefully repugnant to all the best and dearest interests of humanity.

One of the common grounds on which the adherents of ministers rested their defence was, that the opposition only aimed at the enjoyment of the honours and emoluments of office, and that, if they came into power, they would prove themselves as corrupt as their predecessors. Mr. Fox, for himself and those with whom he acted, disclaimed the imputation. The charge of corruption, he said, is given and retorted. We say you apply the public money, and, what is worse, apply it to bad purposes. You allege we want your places. Let us put the controversy to the same issue on which Solomon determined between the

the two women, each of whom claimed the living and disowned the dead child. Let us see to whom the charge of corruption belongs. Ministers say they are desirous that it should be sacrificed. We have often made similar professions. The time is now come to prove the sincerity of both. We submit to have this monster annihilated. You cherish it with a tenderness that proves your interest in its growth. We abandon that to its fate about which you still hang with the fondest indulgence. Can any thing more palpably demonstrate its origin and consanguinity than such an extreme solicitude for its safety and preservation?

Towards the close of the year 1779, Mr. Fox was engaged in a personal contention with a member of the house of commons, which, as it occupied a larger share of the public attention at that time than any preceding occurrence of a similar nature had ever done, deserves particularly to be noticed. Mr. Adam, a Scotch gentleman, but representative for an English borough, who had previously acted in concert with the opposition,

sition, at the opening of the session on the 25th of November 1779, took an opportunity of informing the house of his intention of voting with administration for the future, and, at the same time, solicited their indulgence while he stated the motives of his conduct, and the reasons that had induced him to adopt other opinions. Like all other converts he asserted the purity of his intentions. He disclaimed all connection with party of any description, and protested, in the most peremptory terms, that he had never seen the speech, the address, or the amendment, which were the objects of the day's discussion, till they were read at the table of the house. During the last session, he said, he had been induced to impute our want of success, in the field, to the indecisive measures of ministers; but, on maturer consideration, with the assistance of the lights thrown on the subject by a committee of enquiry instituted by that house, he had been induced to alter his opinion. He had found that ministers were not to blame for all the miscarriages in America, but that the commanders by their unskilful conduct had their full share in them. He

contended

contended that to remove all the present ministers would be prejudicial to the state, as some of them were acknowledged to possess abilities adequate to the great task of saving their country. He passed a warm eulogium on the lord chancellor (Thurlow), whose abilities, he said, had been felt and confessed in that house before he was called to the other; and lord Stormount, who had acquired so much reputation during his embassies at the imperial court and that of France. ——But the part of his speech which gave most umbrage to opposition was, that he assigned as his chief reason for not being able to concur in their amendment, that he could not single out one who was likely to serve the state more efficaceously than his majesty's then servants. The opposition, he said, had betrayed their intentions by the abject concession they would have made to our revolted subjects in America: and he was apprehensive, should they be called into office, that, instead of carrying on the war with vigour, they would terminate it with an inglorious and humiliating peace. He, therefore, was of opinion, that it was better to preserve the

the existing administration, with all their faults, than to remove them to make room for others, the first exercise of whose authority would probably be shewn in the dismemberment of the empire.

This weak and futile apology, for deserting at a crisis of peculiar interest, those with whom he had hitherto acted, necessarily subjected the deserter to much severe, though not unmerited, reprehension from many of his former associates. Mr. Fox spoke with a frankness and energy on the subject, characteristic of his style of debate in the house, and, as the event shewed, gave deep offence by the severity of his remarks to the gentleman against whom they were pointed. In the commencement of his speech, he expressed his astonishment at the extraordinary style of argumentation that had been adopted by Mr. Adam in defence of his political conversion. His motives, which he had fairly avowed, were curious, he said, and original, of a nature with the change he had made, and which would undoubtedly suit the complexion of his future behaviour.

haviour.—In his laudable exertions in behalf of his new connections, he had soared to the very summit of parliamentary enigma; and he could never expect to reach a paradox more elevated and incomprehensible than what he had heard, that because ministers had not been the authors of our disgrace in America, no future blunders, inattention, or treacheries, could ever convince him of their incapacity. He had proved them to be once in the right, and therefore they could never be wrong. They were wrong indeed, in his opinion, up to the last session; but their conduct in the summer had converted his judgment. They are weak, incapable, and inattentive; but they are better than the men who oppose them. They have not a particle of virtue or merit; but they are to be excused, because others are as bad. Weak, wanton, unprovoked, illiberality! If he were in office, and any such man were to apply to him, and say he could not defend him, by calling him wise, capable, and honest, because he knew him to be the reverse, but that he would praise and support him by libelling his opposers, by taking from human nature all the remnant of character

that is left, and by saying, as all were bad, they were to be excused—were such a wretch to come to him with such a speech, he would drive him from him with scorn and contempt, as the pest of society, who wished to level humanity, and to disgrace, by confounding, all distinction between virtue and vice, ability and impotence, wisdom and folly, honour and perfidy. He felt the highest veneration for the respectable characters with whom he acted; but, notwithstanding all his esteem for them, he did not believe their capacities and virtues sufficient to give strength to the present system, and rescue the country from the dangers which involved and threatened her. The weight of their names, the effect of their popularity, and the greatness of their minds, were not adequate to that energy and operation which our affairs required. The salvation of the British empire, he protested, was incompatible with the system avowed by her ministers; the system on account of which they were abandoned by apart of their number, (alluding to some recent changes in the cabinet,) and distrusted, contemned, and reprobated, by the people; a system of policy most calamitous

calamitous in its effects, which had reduced a great and flourishing monarchy to misery, insignificance, and despair; which had rent the empire asunder by domestic discord; and which had rendered our name so contemptible abroad as well as at home, that not a power in Europe would deign to become our ally. It was not the addition of names that could work our deliverance. Nothing short of an absolute change of counsels as well as counsellors could deliver the nation from her present embarrassment. Even lord Chatham, were he now alive, with all his popularity, could not, without the addition of full powers and direction, produce the great end of national salvation. The same unhappy system, which continued to that moment, had been the bane of his majesty's reign. It was not the mere rumour of the streets that the king was his own minister; the fatal truth was evident; and could not now be controverted.—Good God! if any of the house of Stuart yet remained in this country, or any of their adherents, what opportunities have ministers given them, without the exaggerations of fancy, to deliver down to posterity the name

of a sovereign, amiable for his virtues, with all the ignominy he could wish to throw upon the subject! He would say, that the house of Stuart was banished from the throne for doing what the present possessor practised with impunity; and, if he should be told by a real friend to the present house, that his were not the vices of his reign, they were the progeny of his ministers, would he not exclaim—"Might not a Stuart have his bad ministers too?"

Mr. Fox then proceeded to draw a parallel between the present reign and that of Henry VI. His family, like that of the king, he observed, did not claim the crown by hereditary descent. Both owed it to revolutions. Both were amiable and pious princes. Both were descended from renowned and illustrious progenitors. Henry VI. was the son of the most magnanimous and warlike prince that this country ever produced: he lost all his father's conquests, and the greater part of his hereditary possessions in France. His present majesty was the grandson of a most powerful and heroic monarch: he had already seen the

conquests

conquests of his illustrious predecessor wrested from him in the West Indies, and his hereditary provinces of America erected into a separate and independent empire.—Brighter prospects could not be imagined than those which distinguished the commencement of his majesty's reign. Possessed of immense dominions, and the warmest affections of his people, his accession was highly flattering to himself and his subjects.—But how was the scene reversed?—He contrasted the reigns of Henry VI. and his majesty through a variety of striking parallels, and wished God that the concluding scene might not agree.

In reference to the recent change that had taken place in some of the cabinet appointments, which seemed to Mr. Adam, in some degree, to excuse his dereliction from his old party, he took a survey of the characters of the new ministers, and shewed the little probability that any amended system would be pursued through their influence or recommendation. Age and infirmity, he observed, had thrown off its crutches and obstacles, in the person of earl Bathurst, and come forward

again to join those men, for the good of his country, whose injuries had driven him from the counsel board. Lord Stormount, with equal dignity and consistency, had likewise consented to join his majesty's ministers, notwithstanding he had publickly declared, that they had not attended to the information he had officially given them respecting the hostile intentions of the court of France, and consequently knew their unfitness for their situations. Lord Hillsborough, whose conduct had been so prominent a means of creating those disturbances which had produced our humiliation and disgrace, was also called in, at the close of the work, to complete that dreadful tragedy, to which his rash impolitic letter, when last in office, had been the fatal prologue. But, after a fruitful search for those responsible situations, through all the departments of state, in whom the public might confide with safety, the honourable gentleman particularly called our attention to the court of chancery. There, indeed, a noble lord of the most distinguished abilities did infinite honour to the bench on which he sat. His lordship certainly possessed, and deserved, the credit

credit of his country. But it was credit in him as a chancellor, in his professional abilities; not in his talents or address as a minister or a politician. Nor would it be easy to convince the people at large, that his station, his habits, his private studies, or the public duties of his character, permitted him any leisure or convenience for exercising his manly capacity on the management of national affairs. No; these were not the men from whom an empire, without friends, without resources, without union in her fleets or armies, or solid or rational agreement among her ministers, could have any well-founded expectations of relief.

This speech was so highly resented by Mr. Adam, that an explanation was demanded of Mr. Fox, which being refused, the affair terminated in a duel, in which Mr. Fox was slightly wounded*.

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* The particulars of this affair will be best explained

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This affair produced a very strong impression on the public mind, and added greatly to the popularity

by the following letters and statement, which were published at the time by authority.

"St. Alban's Tavern, Saturday, four o'clock afternoon, November 27th, 1779.

"Mr. Adam presents his compliments to Mr. Fox, and begs leave to represent to him, that, upon considering again and again what had passed between them last night, it is impossible for him to have his character cleared to the public without inserting the following paragraph in the newspapers:

'We have authority to assure the public, that, in a 'conversation that passed between Mr. Fox, in consequence 'of the debate in the house of commons on Thursday last, 'Mr. Fox declared, that, however much his speech may 'have been misrepresented, he did not mean to throw any 'personal reflection on Mr. Adam.'

"Major Humberston does me the honour of delivering this to you, and will bring your answer."

To

popularity of Mr. Fox. The people now regarded him, in an especial manner, as their champion; he had boldly hazarded his life, and bled in their cause. His firmness, courage, and generosity, were themes of general approbation, while the conduct of his antagonist was imputed to the basest

To this Mr. Fox returned the following answer:

"SIR,

"I am very sorry that it is utterly inconsistent with my ideas of propriety to authorize the putting any thing into the newspapers relative to a speech, which, in my opinion, required no explanation. You, who heard the speech, must know, that it did convey no personal reflection upon you, unless you felt yourself in the predicament upon which I animadverted. The account of my speech in the newspapers is certainly incorrect, and certainly unauthorized by me; and therefore, with respect to that, I have nothing to say.

"Neither the conversation that passed at Brookes's, nor this letter, are of a secret nature; and, if you have any wish to relate the one, or shew the other, you are perfectly at liberty so to do.

"I am, &c.

"C. J. FOX."

were exposed to a torrent of the most virulent abuse: and the whole affair was considered and exhibited as a most flagrant instance of ferocious and implacable revenge, or, gravely resolved, by popular credulity, into a ministerial conspiracy against the life of a man whose abilities they feared, and whose virtues, popularity, and influence they detested.

The matter was afterwards agitated in the house of commons, in consequence of a similar meeting having taken place between the earl of Shelburne and colonel Fullerton, occasioned by some reflections cast by the former on the character of the latter, in a debate in the house of lords. Sir James Lowther, a person remarkable for having fought more duels than perhaps any other gentleman in his time, introduced the business to the notice of the house, and thought the interference of parliament essential to the preservation of its privileges. He wished not to reprobate gentlemen's defence of their honour. It was a quality so sacred, that no man of spirit could suffer it to be injured with impunity. But

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if every discussion in that house was to produce a duel, members had better relinquish their senatorial capacity at once, and decide their political differences in the field.

This afforded Mr. Adam an opportunity of vindicating himself on the subject of his affair with Mr. Fox. He had acted, he said, from feelings altogether irresistible, without the least communication with any one. He had complied only with the dictates of his own heart, and what had operated on his mind, at the time, as the principles of pure, disinterested honour. These were sentiments which it was impossible for him to relinquish. They had ever guided his conduct, and, he hoped, ever would. He should have thought his character irretrievably lost, or sunk in the estimation of all men of sensibility and honour, if he had wholly overlooked the cause which called him to the field. But, amidst all the unwelcome sensations occasioned by the recollection of an event which must ever be painful, he had the peculiar satisfaction of being enabled, in the face of that house, to do justice to the

the character of the honourable gentleman concerned with him in an affair, which he hoped would be the last of the kind he should ever be involved in. And it gave him the highest pleasure to assert, in the hearing of so respectable an assembly, that he had found in him that manliness, that generosity and spirit, of which all the world supposed him possessed, and which were by no means inferior to those superlative abilities which had justly created him the admiration of mankind, and of none more than himself. He spurned at the ignoble idea of adulation. He meant to flatter no man; and was sure, had he descended so far as to use a language unbecoming a man of honour, the honourable gentleman's liberal spirit and dignity of feeling would reject the fulsome attempt with the disdain it would merit.

Mr. Fox regarded this eulogium with dignified silence; but Mr. Rigby, a gentleman high in office, observing, "that he hoped what had happened that morning, and what had happened before of a similar sort, would have the effect

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of keeping gentlemen within proper limits, and at least teach them better manners;" Mr. Fox, who thought himself glanced at, immediately rose, and observed, "that as the right honourable gentleman was apt to speak in a loose and careless way, he might perhaps, have had no particular meaning in what he said; but, as the words seemed to point to him, he was under the necessity of taking notice of them. He begged for one to say, that what had happened to him had not taught him better manners, nor should it ever restrain him within any other limits, than those which he had chalked out for himself."

But to quit this subject, and proceed with our narrative of the public life of Mr. Fox. Early in the year 1780, the indignant feelings of the nation were at length roused to a just sense of the flagrant misconduct of the servants of the crown, the disgrace of the British arms abroad, and the heavy burthens imposed on the people at home, and meetings were held throughout the kingdom, to take into consideration the alarming state of public affairs. The speech of Mr. Fox at a meeting

ing of the inhabitants of Westminster, held in Westminster-hall on the 2d of February 1780, at which he was called to the chair, deserves particular notice, as well on account of the faithful picture it gives of the errours of government, as the sound constitutional remedy it proposes for their correction.

" Were you, gentlemen," said Mr. Fox, " to ask every member, as he passes through this hall to the house of commons, what he thought of the measures, and what of the honesty and wisdom, of ministers, he would tell you he detested and despised them. Yet, ten to one, the very same member should be instructed, by the nod of authority, to vote on whatever question the minister inclined. This corruption, which they have been enabled, through the profligacy of parliament, to render so formidable and so universal, contains within itself the baleful source of its own continuance. What but this daily enlarges the influence of the crown, which is at last become so much the more dangerous, that it assumes the very forms of the constitution, and

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attacks the most valuable of our liberties with impunity? It is therefore high time we should all unite in one great national effort in behalf of our own safety. Nothing but some such popular exertion, the legal and constitutional association of the people at large, can rescue our franchises from that dreadful influence which at this moment threatens their extinction.

"What is the government of this country? Does it not consist of king, lords, and people? Is the house of commons more or less than the delegate or representation of the people, who intrust, for a limited time, their power, their rights, and their interests, in their hands? The moment that delegated body becomes perfidious, the interests of their constituents are abandoned, and they, instead of being the representatives of the people, become the slaves or passive instruments of the crown. Is this then the case? Are they, or are they not, in this critical predicament? I will not say they are yet so notoriously and universally profligate. But if they refuse to grant what the people ask; if they spurn

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measures of economy; if they affect to treat the remonstrances of their constituents with contempt or indifference, from that moment they forfeit their character and their authority; and it is legal, constitutional, and necessary, for the people to resume that trust which has been thus prostituted to their disadvantage. This is the universal sense of the nation. Individuals every where feel and avow it, and no man can be so depraved, so blinded by faction, or so ignorant of his dignity and birth right, as to deny the doctrine.

"The adherents of ministry, who enjoy those extravagant emoluments and unmerited pensions which are so much the object of national umbrage, may deem it unconstitutional to be deprived of them. They do say so in holes and corners. But they dare not boldly come forward at the public meetings and avow their sentiments. Protests may be contrived as senseless as they are impudent, by men who are robbing the public, in the present hour of general despondency and distress, in secret cabals: and these may be sent to hedge ale houses to be signed by their needy dependents

dependents: but will they meet the people of England fairly, and support their claims and pretensions to such extravagant emoluments by public proof? You meet in the eyes of all the world, and declare your sense of our public situation like citizens and like men.

"It is said that petitions lead to anarchy and confusion. They do not. Their consequence is the reverse. They tend to prevent every sort of public mischief, to avert the downfall of the empire, to restore us to harmony and unanimity, and to recover our national consequence and tranquillity by vigour, exertion, and success. But this is not a time to embarrass government! Is that then the object of the petition? No! Their aim is œconomy, and œconomy is giving new supplies to government. All that can be saved from the sink of corruption will thus contribute to the public service, give additional strength to our arms, and enable us to maintain, with spirit and effect, the dreadful and unequal struggle in which we are engaged. We are told this is not a time for these complaints or this reforma-

tion! What! is not the moment of necessity the moment for relief? When is œconomy most seasonable but when pressed for supplies? The measure would be criminal indeed, were we contriving how to burthen the people with more taxes; but we wish to answer the demands of the state,—not by additional impositions, but by a frugal application of what we already possess. This reform originates from men who never attempted it themselves when in power. Whigs and Tories have been equally prodigal. The charge has some foundation, but has no argument. The calamity has advanced to this moment unredressed. But till this moment it was never so generally felt, or so clearly understood. Nor was it ever so formidable or enormous as now. When success crowns every effort of a great people, and conquest makes them glorious and happy, they are not so apt to grudge the expenditure of public money. Then they give with pleasure, because what they give, though not spent with œconomy, yet enlarges their territory and enhances their renown. But when defeat, shame, and dismay, haunt and harass them

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in every quarter, when their exertions grow weak and languid, they are tempted by curiosity, as well as concern, to call their servants to account, and to inspect, with a jealous severity, their public disbursements.

" Formerly, when a minister was attacked, his vindication generally rested on the merits he possessed. But now the friends, or rather the adherents (for friends they have none), of the present junto abandon that ground. Their warmest advocates affect not to say they are wise, capable, virtuous, zealous, or vigilant.' No ! they have long given them up to the just but indignant accusations of the people. Still, however, they exclaim, their enemies are as bad. They have no other defence, and the cause deserves no other. Thus they attempt to blacken human nature, to throw the foulest calumny on mankind, and, in the plenitude of conscious deformity, to libel the whole species, by reducing them to their own deplorable standard.

" The necessity of national exertion, at this

moment, is obvious. The people know well the origin of monarchy. It is the reward which gratitude induced them to pay individuals of extraordinary heroism and virtue for rescuing them from slavery, extending, planning, or establishing their interests, or other eminent or patriotic actions. Such is the origin of kingly authority; and what gratitude at first produced, prescription, habit, happiness in some instances, and weakness in others, combined and maintained. Nations are excusable for confering royalty on the man who gives them glory and empire. But what opprobrium must that people suffer who permit themselves to be enslaved in a reign not immortalized by the lustre of enterprize? They have no other apology than tameness, servility, and corruption. Were the value of liberty unknown, were its nature either undefined or misunderstood, ignorance might cover their insignificance. They might be pitied. They could not be condemned. But, having every advantage of information and science, the amplest liberty, and the justest sense of its worth, with the example before their eyes what manly resistance must

must produce, their indifference will be universally detested, and infamy added to ruin.

" Nothing but the determined resolution of the people, the temperate and firm decision of Englishmen, united in one plan and pressing to one point, can now save them. Thus united, thus resolved, thus acting, no prince however obstinate, no parliament however venal, can oppose or resist them with effect. Call to mind the treatment you have received, the manner in which you have been loaded with taxes, and that, in the midst of public calamity and public want, the early revenue of the sovereign is increased a hundred thousand pounds, and that he is the only person whose estate is not to suffer from the incapacity and prodigality of his servants; and judge for yourselves whether you have any thing to expect from such a ministry and such measures. You must be the ministers of your own deliverance, and the road to it is open. You see the effects of manly resolution. Your brethren in America and Ireland shew you how to act when bad men force you to feel. Are we not born heirs of the

same privileges? Are we not possessed of equal veneration for our lives and liberties? Does not the blood flow as freely in our veins as in theirs? Are we not as capable as they are of spurning at life when unaccompanied with freedom? Did not our forefathers fight and bleed for their rights, and transmit them as the most valuable legacy they could bequeath to posterity? And shall we not then join heart and hand to do ourselves right in this crisis of danger and oppression? Shall the heart of the empire be tame and lifeless while her limbs are in activity and motion? No! I trust corruption has not yet extended her debilitating influence to the people, who are the vitals of the great body politic.

"Without association you must fall a sacrifice to that corruption which has given the crown an influence unknown to any former period of our history. Permit this influence to increase, and the country is enslaved, freedom destroyed, and the English constitution completely overthrown. You may be told, associating, in the present instance, has the appearance of controul-

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ing parliament, who have always deemed it an infringement of their privileges for subjects to interfere in the regulation of taxes. Happy had it been for this country, fortunate and honourable had it been for us all, had parliament listened in time to the interfering voice of America, and suffered itself to be controuled by the temperate admonitions of a brave and free people. Instead of anarchy, confusion, and insurrection, we should then have still possessed the dominion and interest of that glorious country, and have been the grateful spectators, at this hour, of peace, order, and good government through the whole empire. But what is there in the word association to alarm or terrify an honest ear? When arguments, however, of terror fail, there is a never-failing topic, with which they work on public credulity, to discourage and suppress every attempt at reformation. They tell you that the persons who court your confidence and call upon you for assistance, are only swayed by self, or alive to no other feelings than the sinister impulse of ambition. Thank God they have not been able to substantiate a single proof of this bold and unwarrant-

able allegation, an allegation, which, if true, were enough to sum up the measure of your misery, and consign you, hopeless and acquiescent, to despair and slavery. Is there, then, no virtue, no integrity, left among you? Consult your own honest, disinterested hearts, and give the base calumniator, who thus vilifies the human species and the human name, and dares so wantonly to insult your personal feelings of honour, the answer he deserves. Facts stand directly in opposition to this unworthy imputation, as far as relates to the conduct of those men who are thus made objects of unremitting scurrility and rancour. Is it a proof of their selfishness and want of principle, that, for a series of years, they have uniformly, and in every part of it, embattled that system which has, confessedly by all men, brought this country into a war of complicated mischief and misfortune, replete with distress and destitute of glory? In such an unequal struggle, they have not only stood opposed to the power and inclination of the crown and its ministers, an immense and hitherto unknown majority in parliament, but have even ventured, in support of their opinions,

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to face the prejudice of a vast body of the people, under the fair hope and confidence that, sooner or later, errour must give way to truth, and justice be done to the purity of their intentions.

" But surely this opposition did not clog the wheels of government, or obstruct the measures of the legislature. Ministers still had the most ample supplies, and possessed the most unbounded rage for profusion. Opposition wielded no other weapons than those of plain arguments and honest admonitions, diligently, but temperately, used for the honour and happiness of the country, and for the maintenance of which, they have almost all of them, in their turn, foregone the possession of present emolument, and repeatedly refused the most tempting proffers of interest and ambition. And what is their present conduct? Is not the proposal, now submitted to you, an unequivocal demonstration of their disinterestedness and zeal to serve you? But I beseech and obtest you to divest yourselves of any partiality or predilection for any set of men.

Judge

Judge of us as we continue to act. Regard our minutest actions with a jealous eye. Your solicitude will only make us more attentive to our duty, and render your good opinion and confidence of higher estimation. We ask of you no favour. We will not have an implicit confidence. We expect and are certain of having justice done to us, by an honest and wise people, in defiance of all the arts of malice and misrepresentation. Let your censure, the severest punishment we can feel, attend us, whenever, in a single instance, we desert or betray your interest. While our conduct remains pure, open, and superior to suspicion, we claim your approbation and your confidence. Nor will you wait our solicitation, but generously bestow what you know, and we feel to be our right."

The chief object of the petitions, which at this period flowed in from all parts of the kingdom, was a reduction of the public expenditure. Men, in every station of life, felt the severity of the taxes; and the unanimous voice of the nation was loudly directed against whatever had the appearance

pearance of prodigal waste in the application of the public money. The pension list stood peculiarly exposed to this imputation; and the advocates of the court system were singularly averse from disclosing the secrets of that venal and ignominious roll. It contained names which they presumed could not be mentioned without indelicacy. They considered it as an inviolable deed of majesty, which, in any degree to diminish, implied an impertinent interference with the king's civil allowance. They asserted that parliament had no controuling power over any branch of the civil-list revenue, and deprecated the least attempt on their part to reform it, as an unwarrantable stretch of authority. So alarming a doctrine as this, seriously broached and maintained, in that branch of the legislature in which alone the superintendence of the public purse is constitutionally lodged, roused the patriotic indignation of Mr. Fox, and drew from him an animated and forcible reply. The people, he said, were scarcely able to support the necessary expense of government; and why should they be impoverished to swell the luxury of the idle and

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the vain? He asserted in the strongest terms, the competence of parliament to inspect the expenditure of the royal revenue, and insisted that the king did not possess a single prerogative which might not be abused; and which, for that reason, was not subjected to the authority of parliament. If parliament, said he, had no right to interfere, to arrange, to reform, and even when no other measure was adequate, to resume her grants of public money to the crown for public purposes, the liberties of the people were at an end. The right to vote and to controul, without that of superintending and calling to account, would reduce the people's delegates to the mere slavery of tax gatherers. He declared, that the king was no more than the creature of the people; their trustee, whose disbursements they had a title to inspect. The parliament made his majesty successor to the throne; but he possessed no hereditary or unalienable right. He was the sovereign of the people, but held the crown only as long as they thought proper. His civil revenue was therefore given solely for the public service, whose representatives undoubtedly had at

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all times a constitutional power to prevent an abuse in the expenditure of it.

Early in the session of 1780, Mr. Burke brought forward a plan of œconomical reform well worthy of the talents of that distinguished senator, and which, had it succeeded, would have produced the public an annual saving of two hundred thousand pounds; and, what perhaps was more desirable, have divested the crown of a proportion of influence equal to the places of fifty members of parliament. This gave rise to many obstinate debates in the house of commons; and, to the disgrace of that assembly, was ultimately rejected, but not without a severe and spirited struggle on the part of opposition. Mr. Fox greatly distinguished himself in every stage of the business, but more particularly on the 4th of March, on a motion for the commitment of Mr. Burke's bill, when lord Nugent, who had long, for reasons that need not be alluded to, been a staunch advocate of the court system, declared, " that the influence of the crown was strictly constitutional, that he would resist the petitions of the people

people in proportion as a diminution of that influence appeared to be the object of them; and that the gentlemen who urged the prayers of those petitions had not, in his opinion, so much the good of their country, as the honours and emoluments of office, at heart." To this contemptible and hacknied jargon, Mr. Fox made an eloquent, manly, and dignified reply.

"His lordship," said he, "talks of dependence; he says that dependence is independence, and that independence is dependence; that mutual independence is mutual dependence, and that mutual dependence is mutual independence. These, sir, are parodoxes that I do not pretend to unravel; but I understand the noble lord when he asserts that the influence of the crown is a constitutional influence. To that opinion, guarded and qualified as it ought to be, I would willingly subscribe; for doubtless the crown forms a third part of the British legislature. But that kind of influence, which the noble lord alludes to, I shall ever deem unconstitutional; for, by the influence of the crown, he means the influence of the crown

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in parliament. As bad an interpreter or commentator as I am deemed to be, [alluding to what lord North had said of him in a former debate,] I am warranted to say this much;—for the noble lord, in defence of the influence of the crown, argues thus:—'Have not great talents and virtues an influence in this house? Has not the influence of the honourable gentleman, who moved this bill, appeared conspicuously in the treatment, in the success, it has already met with?' But that influence, I contend, is influence in parliament; therefore the influence he pleads for, on the strength of this example, is an influence in parliament also. Truly, if that be good doctrine, how many votes in this house are consonant to the spirit of the constitution? For all who wish to hold, or to acquire, places, those among the rest, who wish to acquire them by opposition to government, all vote in a constitutional manner. But I hope to see that doctrine exploded; and do not despair of seeing the house of commons voting that the tenets, avowed and defended this day, by the noble lord, are false, dangerous, and abominable. That noble

lord,

lord, looking towards me, some days ago, put the following question: 'Is there not such a thing as corrupt ambition?' Yes, sir, there is; and the bill in question is an excellent antidote to it. For, when places and pensions are diminished, there will not be so many incitements, as otherwise would exist, to false and corrupt ambition.—But, while I reprobate an interested and false ambition, there is an ambition, of which, in my opinion, a man has not any cause to be ashamed. The Author of Nature has implanted in the human breast an invincible sensibility to the sentiments entertained of us by those around us; and an endeavour to distinguish one's self by honourable actions is itself honourable. To seek court favour, through the paths of intrigue, through secret, lurking, dark, and winding bye-ways, is an ambition unworthy of a man; and, if this were true ambition, the sentiment of Shakspeare must be false, who affirms, that '*ambition should be made of stony stuff.*' No, sir, if that were true ambition, it should be made of soft and pliant stuff. But true ambition walks in the face of the world, in a plain and open road; *ad gloriam via virtutis;*

virtutis; it points to glory through the paths of virtue: and of this ambition, I trust that neither I, nor any of the gentlemen who are near me are entirely destitute.

" There is a wicked, heretical, and damnable court doctrine, which has of late been propagated with infinite solicitude, and held out as a trap for the honest credulity of the people, that all ambition is self-interested, that all men are alike, and that every man has his price. This abortive theory is obstinately persisted in, though daily and notoriously belied by practice. For ministry, it is well known, have, for many years, been endeavouring, by every offer and manœuvre in their power, to buy us in vain. But the noble lord, full of these erroneous and detestable sentiments, affects to treat the opposition with scorn, and boasts, in that kind of language, and with that supreme confidence which is never likely to forsake him, that ministry *have been* supported for ten whole years by *country* gentlemen. He understands them to be most independent, because most wealthy. He is not alone in this idea,

and it is not perhaps unnatural for those in his situation to indulge it. The style of his lordship's speech, however, is much more consolatory than the matter of it. The preterperfect tense is adapted to his lordship's argument with great propriety. He says the country gentlemen *have* supported ministers, not that they *do*, but they *have done*. I trust in God, this fatal support is no more. The petitions of the people have converted their representatives, and impressed them with that affecting distinction which subsists, as it has long subsisted, between the interest of ministers and that of the nation.

" But who does the noble lord mean by country gentlemen? For county members I have the greatest possible respect; but I do not say, I hope no man will venture to say, in this house, that they are better men, or honester members of parliament, than the representatives of towns, cities, or boroughs. For riches, I hope, are not the only test of independence of spirit; if they were, I should have little face to assert my own independency, which I do, in this assembly. Sir,

as

as on the other hand there are men, whose base, servile, and timid souls cannot be rendered independent by any extent of property, so, I trust, there are others, whose love of freedom is not to be subdued, into dependence and servility, by any degree of poverty or any reverse of fortune. The same noble lord, who fairly and boldly avowed and defended the influence of the crown in parliament, honestly acknowledges that we have lost thirteen provinces. I like that noble lord's candour; it is manly; it is noble to speak the truth. The noble lord contends that this loss must necessarily diminish the influence of the crown. In time, it must do so infallibly, but it has not done so yet; on the contrary, the millions and millions that are voted for the reduction of the colonies, under the obedience of the crown, bestow on its influence a temporary increase. But, whatever weight may be thought in this last argument, let not the noble lord, after what he has acknowledged this day, have any objection, when we shall go into the committee, to the abolition of the office of secretary for the colonies. I hope, after what has this day been acknowledged, that

we shall hear no more of salaries continued to mock governors of the colonies, and, above all, that we shall hear no more of the justice or propriety of continuing his pension to that firebrand, and source of all the contests in America, the late governor of New England [Mr. Hutchinson].

" It has been said, that institutions are not to be abolished because they may be abused or perverted from their original design; that the influence of the crown is not to be eradicated from the British constitution, because it may occasionally transgress its due bounds, any more than the liberty of the press, which is the palladium of our freedom, although it has been abused, and become the source of great and execrable enormities. The most sacred names and characters, it is justly observed, have not escaped calumny and reproach; yet who will contend that the liberty of the press ought to be restrained and suppressed? Sir, I have the greatest attachment to the person of my gracious sovereign; yet I think, that amidst the general wreck of character, that has been occasioned in this country by the unbounded

bounded licence of the press, it would be unreasonable to expect, that the most conspicuous character in it should escape unhurt. I blame writers for not distinguishing the sacred person of the king from his ministers; and I blame ministers still more for using the king's name to measures the most odious and detestable. They ought to have told their gracious and royal master, that to increase his civil list, while his subjects were groaning under taxes, to reduce nations to the necessity of resistance by oppressive measures, and then to set one part of his dominions at war with another, were things that must subject any character to infamy. These things they ought to have foretold, and not to complain of an effect, which must necessarily flow from their own conduct.

"This, I confess, is extraneous matter, and not immediately connected with the question before us. But the conduct of gentlemen on this side of the house was traduced, and it was natural to repel attacks when they were made. If it be true, that opposition have, through corrupt am-

bition, dissevered America from the mother country, and armed the inhabitants of Ireland against their fellow subjects of Great Britain; if they want to unhinge the constitution, by destroying the power of a third part of the legislative; if, from envy and disappointment, we wish to throw all things into confusion, and to hang upon the wheels of government at a time when we ought to accelerate the motion; all that is said against us is far too mild and gentle. The Morning Post* has not devised terms of ignominy and reproach adequate to our demerit. But if on the contrary, we neither have nor can have any other motive for our conduct than a zeal to extricate this country out of the difficulties and dangers in which the conduct of a weak administration has plunged it, how can we refrain from expressing our indignation against men who falsely accuse us as the cause of those misfortunes of which themselves are the authors; and who throw every difficulty and delay in the way of our endeavours to retrieve them?"

The

* A news-paper at that time extremely violent in its abuse of opposition.

The 6th of April, 1780, was a day memorable in the annals of parliament for the resolutions which the house of commons had the virtue to pass, declaring, that "the influence of the crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished:"—"that it is competent to the house of commons to examine into, and to correct abuses in the expenditure of, the civil list revenues, as well as in every other branch of the public revenue, whenever it shall seem expedient to the wisdom of the house so to do:" and, "that it is the duty of this house to provide, as far as may be, an immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the petitions presented to the house by the different counties, cities, and towns in this kingdom."

The first of these resolutions was carried by a majority of 18, the numbers being 233, who declared against the influence of the crown, to 215 who supported ministers. The other resolutions were carried without a division. Mr. Fox moved, the same evening, that the resolutions should be immediately reported. This was op-

posed by the minister, with all the energy he retained, as being unusual, violent, and arbitrary. But the torrent was too strong to be resisted. The resolutions were severally reported and received; and, after being read a first and second time, were agreed to, and confirmed by the house, without a division*.

The

* Mr. Burke, in the historical part of the Annual Register for 1780, speaking of these transactions, says, "Such was the complete and decisive victory gained, in behalf of the petitions, by opposition on that extraordinary and memorable day. The exultation and triumph on one side of the house was only equalled by the evident depression and dismay which prevailed on the side of administration. Indeed the appearance of things was sufficient to strike the boldest with dismay: nor does it seem, that any proposition could have been brought fairly before the house on that night, which, in the spirit that then prevailed, would not have been carried against the ministers. When the nature and tendency of the questions are considered, and the manner in which they were carried is attentively viewed, scarcely any thing more important seems to have been proposed and carried since the revolution. The system of the court was shaken to its foundation. Without doors, the joy and triumph in most parts of England, as well in most

The patriotic party continued for a few days triumphant in the house of commons; but an unfortunate illness of the speaker having occasioned an adjournment from the 14th to the 24th, the minister seized the interval to recruit his strength, and, with so much success, that when the house met, all plans of reformation were at an end. On the day of meeting, Mr. Dunning brought forward a motion, which had been postponed on account of the speaker's illness, for an address to his majesty, requesting that he would not dissolve parliament nor prorogue the present session until proper measures should be taken by that house to diminish the influence of the crown and to correct the other evils complained of in the petitions of the people.

This motion occasioned long and animated debates, but was at length rejected by a majority

most of the counties that did not petition as in those that did, was great and general; and, though not displayed in the same manner, would not perhaps have been exceeded, on occasion of the most decisive victory over a foreign enemy."

of

of 51, the numbers who voted against it being 254, to 203 who supported it.

Mr. Fox, immediately after the motion had been thus disposed of, rose to speak, but was for some time prevented from proceeding by the clamours of the majority, who dreaded to hear the deserters from the popular party treated as they deserved; but the exertions of the speaker having at length restored order, Mr. Fox proceeded to pronounce one of the most keen and pointed philippics that was ever heard in the walls of the house of commons. No calls to order, nor any other means, could either check the torrent of his eloquence or restrain the bitterness of his invective.

A tergiversation so grossly flagrant and unexpected roused his utmost indignation. He declared the vote of that night to be scandalous, disgraceful, and treacherous. He did not apply these charges to the 215 gentlemen, who had, along with the minister, opposed the resolutions of the 6th of April. These gentlemen acted an open,

open, consistent, and a manly part, in opposing the address proposed on the present day. They had differed from him; he was sorry for it; but he could not blame them, because they differed from him upon principle.

But who could contemplate, he said, without a mixture of the greatest surprize and indignation, the conduct of another set of men in that house—those who had resolved that the influence of the crown was increased, and ought to be diminished; that the grievances of the people ought to be redressed; who pledged themselves to that house, to the nation, to their constituents, to each other, and to themselves, that it was their duty to redress the grievances complained of; and who had now shamefully fled from that solemn engagement?—Like the case of an individual, who engages to pay a sum of money, or incur a penalty, he insisted that they had solemnly entered into a bond, with the people of England, to withstand the encroachments of prerogative, and to destroy that enormous overgrown corruption which threatened the very existence

istence of their liberties.—But, though they had thus pledged themselves to redress the grievances of the public, they were not, it seems, to be bound by ties the most sacred and forcible. Such a conduct was unaccountable to him on any other motives than those of the basest treachery.

No man, he said, held those who were habitually at the devotion of the minister in greater contempt than he did. They were slaves of the worst kind, because they sold their own liberty to effect the slavery of others. Yet base as the tenure of their places was, they still possessed the virtues of fidelity, gratitude, and consistency, nor added to their other demerits the absurdity and treachery of one day resolving an opinion to be true, and the next declaring it to be a falsehood. They had not deceived their patron, their friends, or their country, but had fairly adhered to their avowed sentiments. This conduct, so far as it went, was entitled to his approbation. He could forgive the man whom he saw voting regularly with the minister, through thick and thin, on every question; he could view him in his

his servile state, the abject puppet of despotism, with sentiments of commiseration; he could excuse his cringing and bowing at the levee of the prince or the premier; every creature knew best how to act in his own element; but when he witnessed men affecting the very principles at one time which they opposed at another, it filled him with horrour. His inmost thoughts revolted at such a shameless versatility of sentiment. It reduced politics to a mere science of loss and gain. It made the duty of representation a farce. It was an insult on the faith of the nation; and exhibited parliament to the world as acting without any regard to right or wrong.

From this time to the close of the session, which was the last of this parliament, the minister retained and increased his majorities; and the efforts of the opposition grew feeble in proportion as their prospect of success diminished. The motion of Mr. Dunning, on the 26th of May, in a committee of the whole house, to report the resolutions of the 10th of April, which purported, "that in order to secure the independence of parliament,

parliament, and to obviate all suspicions of its purity, within seven days after the meeting of parliament, every session, there be laid before that house, by the proper officer, an account of all monies paid out of the civil list, or any part of the public revenue, to or for the use or in trust for any member of parliament, since the last recess, by every person who shall have paid the same," was rejected by a majority of 43, and was the last effort on the part of opposition to procure the people a redress of their grievances, as prayed for in their petitions. The dreadful riots which happened a few days afterwards, and threatened the capital with destruction, necessarily occasioned a suspension of party animosities, and united Whigs and Tories, men of all denominations, in a strict union to preserve the constitution inviolate from the desperate attempts of misguided fanatics and a licentious rabble. The popular commotions, which unhappily at this period assumed so dangerous an aspect, strengthened the hands of ministers, for the time at least, and by the alarm which they excited and which continued to subsist long after the actual danger was over,

over, put an end to all immediate attempts at the correction of public abuses. Ministers, in other points destitute enough of foresight, had the sagacity, in this instance, to take advantage of the consternation that had seized all classes of people, and by a temperate use of their authority, at a very critical and extraordinary juncture, acquired to themselves a higher reputation for ability than they had any legitimate claim to.—It was probably under the influence of this new acquired popularity, that they soon after recommended his majesty to dissolve that parliament, which had oftener than once threatened them with the loss of office, and which, in many of their proceedings, could not be supposed to have been very acceptable to the monarch himself.

The political character of Mr. Fox had by this time been completely developed. He was decidedly the most popular senator in the kingdom; not from a concurrence of fortuitous circumstances in his favour, like those which elevated Mr. Pitt, when distinguished as the *great commoner*,

commoner, to such a height of popular applause, but from a conviction operating through the nation at large, that the public good was the paramount aim and end of his conduct.—From the period of his quitting the court party, he had inflexibly proved himself, what a member of the house of commons ought to be, a vigilant guardian of the rights and liberties of the people: he cherished and watched over their interests with unceasing solicitude: he considered the great body of the people as radically invested by nature with all the majesty of authority and law, and that whatever militated against their happiness was contrary to the true end of government. Though obliged by national habits and legislative forms to act as a party man, there was nothing of petty cabal, low-mindedness, or insignificance in his system of opposition; it was directed to great interests and objects, and actuated by noble motives. The corruptions of the court had no allurements for him. He regarded himself, what about this time he began to be popularly designated, as the MAN OF THE PEOPLE; he had no feelings or interests separate from

from theirs; and prosecuted no views of which their advantage was not the ultimate object.

At a meeting of the electors of Westminster, held early in the year, of which we have already taken some notice, Mr. Fox was invited to become a candidate at the next general election. In returning thanks on that occasion, he said, that a steady support of the rights and liberties of the people of England, against every attempt to crush them by force or to undermine them by corruption, was the only plea on which he founded his hopes. In his address to the electors, on the dissolution of parliament, he disclaimed all confidence in the influence of fortune, connections, or personal consequence, and declared that he acted only in obedience to those commands which had formerly been laid upon him by a numerous meeting of the most respectable electors. The distinguished honour which he then received, he had uniformly attributed to their approbation of his public principles; which conscious of having in no instance deserted, he had no doubt but the same partiality which had nominated him as

a candidate would ensure his success on the day of election.

The candidates on this occasion with Mr. Fox were Sir George Rodney, who had recently acquired much deserved popularity by the capture of a valuable Spanish convoy and the defeat of don Juan Langara's squadron, and the earl of Lincoln, eldest son of the duke of Newcastle. The election of sir George Rodney was secure from the first, so that the contest lay entirely between Mr. Fox and the earl of Lincoln. The latter, independent of his own noble connections and the powerful influence of his family, which for many years had a large share in the distribution of the favours of the crown, was supported with all the power of the court and administration. Mr. Fox's recommendations to the favour of the electors, were his splendid talents, his bold and unaccommodating patriotism, his abhorrence of corruption, and his firm adherence to the free and enlightened principles of the constitution.

In his speech from the hustings, on the first day

day of the election, he said his rival was supported by birth and fortune. To these advantages he had no pretension; but he did not consider these as the most essential qualifications for a member of parliament. Honesty, intrepidity, public spirit, and a love of our country, he presumed, as promising to answer more effectually the purpose of general utility, were much more eligible. In point of fortune he acknowledged himself poor, but deemed himself rich in their suffrages. Their very flattering and repeated promises of support compensated his want of a great title and a large estate. The present contest, however, was not between him and lord Lincoln, but between him and a ministry who had reduced this once flourishing empire to the most calamitous and ruinous condition. He, like others, might have enjoyed places and pensions; but these were objects not so dear to him as the welfare of his country; and, from a set of men acting in habitual violence to the constitution, were certainly not compatible with his personal honour.

He had no disrespect, he said, for the noble

lord, who, he was sensible, possessed many amiable and engaing qualities; but gentlemen, whose sentiments coincided with his, were bound to oppose the election of the noble lord as the measures of a court faction who avowed the most determined hostility to their liberties. He took this opportunity of accounting to the electors for the fate of their petition. Parliament, he said, had evidently been corrupted to reject their sober, temperate, and constitutional request of an abolition of unnecessary offices, places, sinecures, and pensions, with a more equal representation of the people. Their petition was rejected under the pretence of being dangerous to the constitution; and such would be the treatment of all petitions which tended to lessen the national expense or destroy the corrupt influence of the crown. Their votes were solicited for a candidate, whose attachment to the party whose politics had dismembered the empire, was avowed. The minister, who obtruded him on them, told them, that by conquering America, they would be eased of their taxes. But how stood the fact? This visionary conquest of America ends in a local

local house-tax on the citizens of Westminster. It was thus all the measures of the minister terminated in some great national misfortune. Their election of lord Lincoln would be an acquiescence in the means of their own ruin, and giving all the assistance in their power to the worst enemies of the public. He conjured them to be active and steady in a contest in which the salvation or destruction of Great Britain, oppression and liberty, were the only parties. It was a struggle in which honesty and firmness had to contend against all the weight of power and corruption; and in which those only who could persuade themselves, that neither they nor any connected with them were likely to have any share in the issue, could innocently take none in the progress of such a conflict. He trusted in God, the spirit of the people would at length be roused. They could never have a better opportunity than was now offered of vindicating their wrongs, and stigmatizing, with universal contempt and abhorrence, those wretched, parasites of power of whom the infamous majority in the last parliament was composed. No

ministry was authorized to prescribe to their choice, but least of all those whose blunders and principles had justly rendered them universally odious and detestable.

As men and as citizens, he urged them to maintain their independence, to preserve those rights in their fullest extent, which could not be lost without their treacherous connivance, and to set an example, at this important crisis, to every other elective body in the kingdom of their public spirit. He concluded with cautioning them strongly against any tumultuous proceedings. Freedom, he said, was only to be preserved by decency and order. And he hoped their conduct would convince their enemies and the world at large, that they aimed not at a lawless, but a constitutional, liberty; and that they could, at all times, coolly, but firmly and efficiently, assert their privileges without disturbing the peace of the community.

The utmost exertions of government were employed to defeat the popular candidate, but

in

in the end the good sense and public spirit of the electors of Westminster prevailed, and sir George Rodney and Mr. Fox were returned as their representatives, the state of the poll being as follows:

For sir George Bridges Rodney -	5298
Mr. Fox - - -	4878
Lord Lincoln - - -	4157

A scrutiny was demanded by the friends of lord Lincoln, which terminated on the 10th of October, when Mr. Fox was declared duly elected, a day that will be thought of by the electors of Westminster with mixed sensations of pride and sadness, as long as the pure principles of the constitution are held in esteem among them, or the memory of the most illustrious of their representatives is preserved.

It may perhaps not be unacceptable to the readers who may favour this publication with a perusal, if we pause for a short time, now we are arrived at this important æra of the public life of Mr. Fox, for the purpose of presenting them with a slight sketch of his private habits and character up to this period; taken, indeed, we must unreservedly confess, not from any private, or what in strictness can be deemed on such topics indisputable sources of information, but from contemporary publications, in the use of which all the merit we can claim will be, to have distinguished between the too warm eulogiums of friends and the exaggerated accusations of enemies.

That extravagant propensity for every species of dissipation and pleasure which distinguished Mr. Fox in his youth, did not forsake him in his maturer years. His attachment to the gaming table was invincible, and he devoted himself with equal

equal eagerness to the amusements of Newmarket. These pursuits, which he followed with his characteristic ardour, led him into many embarrassing difficulties; exposed him to much, but not unfrequently ludicrous*, pecuniary distress; and deprived him of the whole of his patrimonial inheritance†. The equanimity with which he sustained

* No man, it is certain, ever felt more for the misfortunes of others than Mr. Fox, nor was any one ever more easy in breaking his jests on his own. His pecuniary transactions, occasioned by the repeated calls of temporary necessity, though frequent, were never conducted under any affectation of secrecy. A numerous and rapacious set of money-lenders, chiefly Jews, were always in readiness to afford him whatever advances of money his most pressing exigencies required. With these usurious panders to his extravagance he usually transacted business in a back parlour of his house, to which, on that account, he gave the name of the Jerusalem Chamber.

† On the death of his father, which happened in 1774, and that of his elder brother lord Holland, which occurred the same year, Mr. Fox succeeded to a fortune producing an annual income, it has been said, of not less than four thousand pounds. The beautiful house at Kingsgate, in the isle of Thanet, built in imitation of Cicero's villa on the coast

sustained the reverses of fortune, which was exemplary and wonderful, proceeded probably not so

coast of Baiæ, formed part of his inheritance; and, on the death of his brother, he succeeded to the lucrative sinecure of the clerkship of the pells in Ireland.—His sale of this post exposed him to much misrepresentation and abuse. It was alledged by those who were either ignorant of the nature of the transaction or who designedly mis-stated it, that the clerkship of the pells had been given him as a *douceur* by those very ministers against whom he raised and directed so formidable an opposition. This allegation exposed him to the double charge of ingratitude to the minister, and personal indelicacy to the sovereign. On one occasion, the affair was brought forward in the house of commons, by the lord advocate of Scotland (Mr. Dundas), as disgraceful to Mr. Fox, which produced from him a formal and satisfactory reply to all that had been advanced against him on the subject. The question which occasioned the subject to be agitated, was a motion for the better regulating the granting of pensions, when Mr. Fox strongly objected against their being given as a bribe to the assumption of any efficient office. He thought the principle a pernicious one, and, alluding to a sinecure post in Scotland that had lately been conferred on Mr. Dundas in addition to the treasurership of the navy, he said, he could not help remarking, though he meant nothing personally offensive to the

so much from the suavity as from the nobleness of his nature. If he did not look on riches perfectly

the lord advocate, that when the learned lord accepted one office for life, at the same time he was raised to another, and that almost a sinecure, all the world was astonished at such an extraordinary mode of wasting the public money. The lord advocate immediately rose in his own defence, and insisted that he had not obtained the place of *keeper of the signet* in Scotland as an inducement to accept of the treasurership of the navy, a place which he was free to acknowledge did not very well comport with his professional habits and pursuits. He did not, however, think himself unqualified for the place assigned him in Scotland. It was in the line of his profession, and corresponded with his inclinations. And his majesty having been graciously pleased thus to honour him with a patent place, he would assure the right honourable gentleman he would never disgrace his royal master by carrying the patent to market. Mr. Fox claimed the protection of the house, and denied that the transaction alluded to had any thing in it in the smallest degree dishonourable. His father, he said, during his administration, obtained the office of *clerk of the pells in Ireland*, for three lives; and it devolved to him, as part of his patrimony, on the death of his brother, the late lord Holland. He had no connection with administration when they applied to him for the place in question, which he relinquished

fectly with the eye, as certainly he did not use them with the discretion, of a philosopher, his embarrassments never made him forget what was due to himself, nor tempted him to abandon his principles to better his fortunes. This sentiment he has beautifully and forcibly expressed in his INVOCATION TO POVERTY, which appeared about the year 1780, and evidently was composed under some of those trying vicissitudes of fortune to

relinquished on very bad terms for himself, by giving away a thing of greater value than that which he got in exchange. This was the whole negociation for which he had been thus cavalierly criminated. It was a matter well known and frequently talked of; and which no other person than his lordship had ever thought disgraceful or dishonourable in the smallest degree. It was no favour to him from the crown; no boon from his present majesty or any of his ministers; but a legacy left him by one of his relations, and as much at the disposal of the owner as any other species of property whatever. Mr. Rigby, for whose accommodation government first made the purchase, being privy to the whole transaction, declared, that the bargain made by Mr. Fox was perfectly honourable, and in which he never thought him censurable, except for having parted with his patent for less than it was worth.

which

which his predilection for play too often unhappily exposed him.

INVOCATION TO POVERTY.

O Poverty! of pale consumptive hue,
If thou delight'st to haunt me still in view,
If still thy presence must my steps attend,
At least continue, as thou art, my friend.
When Scotch example bids me be unjust,
False to my word, or faithless to my trust,
Bid me the baneful error quickly see,
And shun the world to find repose with thee.
When vice to wealth would turn my partial eye,
Or interest shut my ear to sorrow's cry,
Or courtier's custom would my reason bend,
My foe to flatter, or desert my friend,—
Oppose, kind Poverty, thy temper'd shield,
And bear me off unvanquish'd from the field.

If giddy Fortune e'er return again,
With all her idle, restless, wanton train;
Her magic glass should false Ambition hold
Or Av'rice bid me put my trust in gold;
To my relief then, virtuous goddess, haste,
And bring with thee thy daughters, ever chaste,

Health,

Health, Liberty, and Wisdom! sisters bright,
Whose charms can make the worst condition light;
Beneath the hardest fate the mind can cheer,
Can heal affliction, and disarm despair;
In chains, in torments, pleasure can bequeath,
And dress in smiles the tyrant hour of death.

In another specimen of his poetical talents, which appeared about the same period and was addressed to one of the most accomplished and beautiful women of the age, he touches his foibles with exquisite vivacity, and describes with great refinement and delicacy the sensations produced in his mind by the contemplation of female excellence and charms.

VERSES TO MRS. CREWE.

Where the loveliest expression to features is join'd,
By Nature's most delicate pencil design'd;
Where blushes unbidden, and smiles without art,
Speak the softness and feeling that dwell in the heart;
Where, in manners inchanting, no blemish we trace,
But the soul keeps the promise we had from the face;
Sure, philosophy, reason, and coldness, must prove
Defences unequal to shield us from love:

Then

Then tell me, mysterious inchanter! O tell,
By what wonderful art, by what magical spell,
My heart is so fenc'd, that for once I am wise,
And gaze without rapture on Amoret's eyes;
That my wishes, which never were bounded before,
Are here bounded by friendship, and ask for no more.
Is't reason? no: that my whole life will belie,
For who so at variance as reason and I?
'Ist ambition that fills up each chink of my heart,
Nor allows any softer sensation a part?
Oh, no! for in this all the world must agree,
One folly was never sufficient for me.
Is my mind on distress too intensely employ'd,
Or by pleasure relax'd, by variety cloy'd?
For, alike in this only, enjoyment and pain
Both slacken the springs of those nerves which they strain.
That I've felt each reverse that from fortune can flow,
That I've tasted each bliss that the happiest know,
Has still been the whimsical fate of my life,
Where anguish and joy have been ever at strife.
But, tho' vers'd in th' extremes both of pleasure and pain,
I am still but too ready to feel them again:
If then, for this once in my life, I am free,
And escape from a snare might catch wiser than me,

'Tis

'Tis, that beauty alone but imperfectly charms,
For though brightness may dazzle, 'tis kindness that warms.
As on suns in the winter with pleasure we gaze,
But feel not their warmth, though their splendour we praise;
So beauty our just admiration may claim,
But love, and love only, our hearts can enflame.

The private failings of Mr. Fox, which, it must be confessed, he never shewed any anxiety to conceal, and which were assiduously magnified by his opponents, operated in some degree as a bar to his political advancement, and caused the opinion of the public to hesitate for some time between admiration of his talents and mistrust of his principles. A celebrated divine (Dr. Price), in a fast sermon preached in 1779, made the following reflections, which were universally applied to Mr. Fox, though denied, in a note, by the reverend author to have any intended personal meaning.—" Can you imagine," asked the political theologian, " that a spendthrift in his own concerns will make an œconomist in managing the concerns of others? that a wild

wild gamester will take due care of the stake of a kingdom?—Treachery, venality, and corruption, must be the effects of dissipation, voluptuousness, and impiety. These sap the foundations of virtue. They render men necessitous and supple, and ready, at any time, to sacrifice their consciences, or to fly to a court, in order to repair a shattered fortune and procure supplies for prodigality."—These imputations, which contained the sum and substance of all the charges brought against Mr. Fox by the most uncandid and violent of his adversaries, were thus completely and satisfactorily refuted by his friends:—His powers, they maintained, were too great and active to continue long unemployed. Whoever has attended minutely to the nature of man must be sensible, that the stronger our intellectual faculties are, exercise is the more desirable, and that, in most characters, genius and ambition are so strictly proportionate as in many cases to become almost synonimous terms. There is therefore a stimulus, a principle of activity or restlessness, in original and transcendent minds, of which those formed on an inferior scale have no adequate conception. And, per-

haps, it is owing chiefly to the direction received from habit, authority, or example, that this disposition terminates in the greatest worth or the greatest wickedness. Extremes, so dangerous to ordinary, are the native elements of sublime, capacities. Had not the love of play, with which his enemies so loudly upbraided him, early arrested the vigorous and sanguine capacity of Mr. Fox, who can calculate into what other less honourable excesses his own passions, the seductions of profligate associates, or accidental temptations, might have plunged him. But admitting his culpability on this head, in its fullest latitude, was it not fair to ask, what public business he had neglected, what public virtue deserted, or what public principle belied? Did that amiable and respectable body of men with whom he acted, complain in a single instance of his temper, inattention, dissipation, or obstinacy? With what obligations of politics, friendship, or morality, did his foibles once interfere? Was his extravagance or folly ever known to produce personal inconvenience to any other individual than himself? No member, confessedly, ever attended with more

scrupulous

scrupulous punctuality his parliamentary duty; none came more fully prepared to meet it under every aspect. His engagements to his constituents and his country were kept with inviolable fidelity. His eminent abilities and patriotic virtues might perhaps have been more extensively useful, but for the defects which undoubtedly entered into his character. Still, was it more the duty of the public to be grateful for the benefits they reaped from his services, than censorious for the want of those advantages which an undivided application of his talents might have procured for them. His faults were pardonable exuberances, sanctioned by fashion and the manners of the age; and, notwithstanding all the inquietudes and distractions they brought on himself, occasioned no relaxation of his public efforts for the service of his country.

On the meeting of the new parliament on the 31st of October 1780, Mr. Fox opposed the ministerial nomination of Mr. Cornwall for speaker, and strenuously urged the pretensions of sir Fletcher Norton to be continued in that honourable office. He accused administration, in very pointed language, with having made it a part of their system, during their continuance in office, to disgrace every dignified character in the kingdom, and especially to insult and vilify those men whose conduct had been most approved by the house of commons and the nation at large. Admiral Kepple had been an instance of this, and a new instance was afforded by the present treatment of the late speaker. It seemed as if the ignominious business of that day was to extinguish those sparks of independence, which the virtuous delight to cherish, and to degrade that rectitude which had a just claim to honours and rewards. Unfortunately for the nation, the present example of dismissing from employment a virtuous individual

vidual of high rank, merely because he had uttered his sentiments and given his vote in obedience to the dictates of his conscience, was not a novelty. The marquis of Carmarthen and the earl of Pembroke * had been divested of their offices for the same reason. The conduct of the ministry was equally absurd and unjustifiable. The noble lord (lord George Germain), who made the motion, had filled his speech with empty compliments of sir Fletcher Norton; and after asserting that he was the ablest man the house could choose to sit in the chair, had concluded his address with moving that another gentleman might be elected to fill it. The honourable gentleman (Mr. Welbore Ellis) who seconded the motion, had recommended it to the gentleman moved for, as sir Fletcher Norton's successor, to copy his example; telling him, in the most plain, positive, and direct terms, that his chance of

* The first of these noblemen was dismissed from the lord lieutenancy of the east riding of the county of York, the latter from that of Wiltshire, which had been in his family from the first institution of the office of lord lieutenant, for voting against ministers.

making a good speaker rested on his following the model of sir Fletcher Norton. But would any men, except the present ministers, refuse an excellent original, which it was in their power to possess, and fix their choice upon a copy, on a supposition that it might not prove much unequal to the finished workmanship of the master? The true reason which actuated administration in the present measure was, however, sufficiently apparent; the gentleman whom they proposed as a new speaker was one of those who had voted in the last parliament in opposition to the sense of the majority of the house, that the influence of the crown had not increased, that it was not increasing, and that it ought not to be diminished. This was his recommendation: whilst the ministry were desirous of removing sir Fletcher Norton, because he had executed the office of speaker with impartiality, had performed his duty to the house and to the nation, in his address to his majesty, on the commons granting him a great augmentation of his revenue, and had voted, agreeably to truth and to the dictates of his conscience, "that the influence of the crown had

increased,

increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished." These were his crimes, and these were crimes not to be forgiven. He hoped the house, in a matter so essentially concerning their own character and privileges, would not suffer themselves to be dictated to by ministers; and, as the health of sir Fletcher Norton was apparently very good, it would be sufficiently early to talk of a successor to him, whenever unhappily for his family and the public, the state of his health should require a retirement from the fatigues of public business.

His majesty's speech at the opening of parliament necessarily brought the state of the nation under the consideration of the house. When the address, as usual an echo of the speech, had been moved, and an amendment proposed by opposition, Mr. Fox rose to support the latter, and began by observing, that the speech from the throne had not brought any tidings of consolation, or enlivened the gloominess of the political horizon, even by distant views of an amendment in that reproachful plan of measures so stubbornly

adhered to by the servants of the crown. It seemed to him to be the height of ridicule and a premeditated insult on the feelings of the people, when it was declared in the speech, " that the late elections had afforded his majesty an opportunity of receiving the most certain information of their wishes." Did this extraordinary idea arise from the remembrance of the sudden dissolution of the last parliament, the season at which it had been permitted to take place, and the unworthy artifices which had been employed to bias the constituents in their choice of representatives. He hoped the day might come when the house would thoroughly investigate this criminal proceeding, and drag forward to the public indignation the ministers from whom it had originated. It was an act committed by stealth, that astonished and alarmed the multitude, although it made no great impression upon him, who, having turned his eyes, for a preceding length of time, to every operation of the officers of the state, could fathom all their views, and easily foretel that a general election would start up, when neither the constituents nor the candidates were sufficiently

prepared

prepared to frustrate the insidious designs of government; when many voters were employed to gather in the harvest; when the encampments yet remained, and when gentlemen bearing commissions in the militia, and absent on the service, were removed to a distance from those places, in the faithful representation of which they had opposed and censured the ruinous and disgraceful management of public affairs. Thus, from an unwillingness to gratify the wishes of the people, and from a total disregard to the maintenance of tranquillity within the island, the ministers had even laboured to render the rapid modes of dissolving one parliament and of chusing another, hostile to the privileges of the subject and to the spirit of the constitution. The officers of the crown, he farther remarked, were amenable to public inquiry for their presumptuous and alarming violation of the principles of the constitution, when they commanded the military, in every part of England, even in towns where the riots had either subsided, or never broken out, to act discretionally, without waiting for the intervention of the civil magistrate. This guilt, so daring in its nature,

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was highly aggravated by their adherence to the perpetration of it, until all the popular elections were concluded: for, previous to that period, the orders were not withdrawn.

It had been said, continued Mr. Fox, that expressions of despondency, at the present period, were very unworthy of Englishmen, whatever might be the dangers of the state: and he admitted, that no passion could be more odious and unnatural to the gallant temper of an Englishman than despair. But at the present moment of embarrassment and distress, when the brightest jewel was torn from the royal diadem, when America was dissevered from the British empire never to be reunited; when a spirit of revolt appeared waiting only for an opportunity to blaze out, in those disgusted territories that yet remained; at such a time, to approach the throne with congratulatory addresses, was not loyalty, but cruel mockery and insult. Was it despair, to persist in offering to the consideration of the house such sentiments and advice as the exigencies of the moment might obviously suggest; to investigate

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our real force by a comparison with that which was exerted to oppose it; and to deliberate on the policy of prosecuting those enterprizes, from which little prospect of advantage appeared, and which might involve the state in misery and destruction?

In the address which was proposed, Mr. Fox remarked, that the blessings of his majesty's reign were to be recognized; but in this he could not concur, as he was not acquainted with those blessings. The present reign had been one continued series of disgrace, misfortune, and calamity. It had also been asked, whether honourable mention ought not to be made of the late successes in America, and of the gallant officers by whom they had been obtained? To this he should answer, that he would not thank his own brother *, who was now serving in America, for any success he might obtain; and as long as he lived, he never would join in a vote of thanks to any officer,

* The honourable general Edward Fox, at present commander in chief of the British forces in the Mediterranean.

whose

whose laurels were gathered in the American war. His reason was, that he hated and detested the war; and that he regarded it as the fountain head of all the mischief and of all the calamities, under which the country now laboured. Much had been said of the efforts which had been made by this country during the course of the present war; and it was asserted that we had astonished all Europe by our exertions. This he should not controvert; but should only observe, that the violent efforts of Great Britain resembled the ungovernable fury of a lunatic, who, aiming at impossibilities, exceeds, for a moment, in force the well-directed struggles of individuals possessed of understanding. The latter might persevere and conquer. The former, enfeebled by exertions, becomes at length the victim of his own phrenzy. Mr. Fox farther added, that notwithstanding the advantages which had been gained in America, he was well convinced that the ministerial prospects of success would ultimately close with the delusion and disappointment they merited. He was therefore against the address, and should support the amendment.

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A few days after the delivery of this speech, Mr. Fox received an affecting proof of the kindness and good opinion of his new constituents. His conduct at the opening of the session, and on the motion for an address, had exceeded their most sanguine expectations; and they thought it became them, as friends of liberty and the constitution, to adopt some mode of testifying their approbation of a conduct so spirited and meritorious. Accordingly, the Westminster committee of association, at a meeting held at the King's Arms tavern, Palace Yard, on the 10th of November 1780, adopted the following resolutions, declaratory of their attachment and respect to Mr. Fox, which were immediately published in the newspapers.

" Resolved, That the thanks of this committee be given to the honourable Charles James Fox, for his conduct in the house of commons on Monday last, on which day, with a firmness becoming the representative of a free people, he exposed the pernicious principles and destructive measures of an abandoned administration, and afforded

afforded the fullest evidence to his constituents, that neither the temptations of men in power, nor apprehensions of their treatment, could cause him to deviate from that line of parliamentary conduct which he had hitherto pursued with so much honour, or induce him to desert the cause of the people.

"Resolved, As it is reasonable and just, that public approbation and support should be afforded to those men who defend the public cause, that Mr. Fox, by his conduct on that day, hath further endeared himself to his constituents, and, in the strongest manner, interested the inhabitants of this city and liberties in his welfare.

" Resolved, That this committee, being sensible that the firm, constant, and intrepid performance of his duty, will probably render him, in common with other distinguished friends of liberty, the object of such attacks as he has already experienced, and to which every unprincipled partizan of power is invited by the certainty of a reward, most earnestly exhort the inhabitants of West-

minister

minster to do their utmost, by every legal measure, to preserve, to the great body of citizens by whom he has been elected, and to his country, the benefit of his services, and the inviolable security of his person.

" Resolved, That this committee do adjourn to this day sevennight, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon.

(Signed) " JOHN CHURCHILL,
Chairman."

The third of these resolutions, which obviously pointed to Mr. Adam, the former antagonist of Mr. Fox, excited a strong degree of resentment in the mind of that gentleman, and induced him to call the attention of the house of commons to the subject. He reprobated the proceedings of the Westminster committee as vindictive and injurious to his character; and, in the vein of irony, congratulated Mr. Fox on the exclusive privilege with which they had invested him, of dealing out what personal abuse he should please. He was far, however, he said, from thinking

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Mr. Fox capable of taking advantage of any thing his popularity might afford him not consistent with the strictest honour; but he could not refrain from wishing him joy of the inviolable security given to his person. It was an instance of extraordinary attention in his constituents and countrymen. It had no precedent, except in the remote ages of antiquity. Pisistratus, the Athenian, had a body guard, appointed by the people of Athens for the security of his person, and by their means he ultimately overturned the liberties of his country. He would therefore hail Mr. Fox —Pisistratus the second. He would hail him king of Westminster; but, at the same time, he was at a loss, whether most to rejoice with him, or condole with his country, on account of those internal feuds and animosities which originated in committees and associations. It was at the same time not a little hard, that the partizans of Mr. Fox could not be satisfied with doing him homage without insulting others. This, he knew, must depreciate their complimentary address in the view even of the honourable gentleman himself, whose merits were of too transcendent a

quality

quality to depend on the demerit of any other individual whatever.

The slander intimated against him in one of the resolutions of the committee, to which he had referred, imputed his conduct, on a former occasion, to motives which, he trusted in God, he should ever hold in the greatest abhorrence. He had then thought his character, which was dearer to him than life, at stake; and, though he had felt for dear and faithful relations, for an amiable wife, an infant son, and other near and valuable connections; though their tender and interesting attentions and fidelity constituted his supreme happiness on earth; these, with every other thing of consequence, he had been forced to hazard for the sake of a reputation which he had thought attacked, and which he should deserve no longer than he was willing and ready, at every risque, to vindicate. Could any thing, therefore, short of the most inordinate malice, exhibit him as acting from mercenary views in such a predicament? Principles, by which could he then have been actuated, he must have been

more mean, more depraved, baser than the basest of mankind.

The attention of the house was now very naturally turned on Mr. Fox, who, as soon as Mr. Adam had concluded his harangue, immediately rose, and, in an eloquent and masterly speech, vindicated himself and his constituents from the charges thrown out against them by that gentleman.

"The honourable gentleman," said he, "who feels himself so extremely sore at the resolutions of the Westminster committee, which he has now read to the house, has uttered various expressions of personality, on which it is not my intention to make any animadversions. I must assure him, however, as well as the house, that upon my honour, I was not present at the drawing up of that advertisement, nor was it published either by my consent or with my knowledge. Had I not been absent, all the persuasion I am master of should have been exerted in preventing the committee from coming to any such decision. Though this

this resolution evidently originates in a zeal and affection peculiarly honourable to me, it is, notwithstanding, in my opinion, imprudent and impolitic. For this I appeal to my honourable friend colonel Fitzpatrick, who knows what sentiments I uttered on first seeing it in a public paper. It struck me, at once, to what misconstructions it was liable; and the event has sufficiently verified my apprehensions.

" The honourable gentleman has treated me with abundance of ridicule. This, however, is a matter of perfect indifference to me. The gentlemen who formed the committee are great and respectable characters, who, I doubt not, have well weighed every word used in the resolution, considered its import fully, and are prepared to justify whatever they have done with their honour and their reputation.

" But, after all that has been said, what is this very obnoxious resolution which has been reprobated with so much warmth? Is it any thing more than a mere form of words, flowing from

the good opinion which the Westminster committee are pleased to entertain of me? but which, seriously and duly considered, conveys no personal charge against any man, much less do the words by which it is expressed, warrant any angry or resentful comments.

" I must own, too, I do not clearly understand how the house can treat a matter, introduced in a manner so very extraordinary by the honourable gentleman, without making it the subject of any motion or resolution whatever. Had he thought himself warranted to treat the advertisement seriously, why did he not complain of it as a breach of privilege? This was the regular mode of proceeding; and I am ready to meet him on that ground, and defend the conduct of the committee. If he chuses to make it the subject of another sort of process, in the courts below, he will find the gentlemen, who compose that committee, themselves not less prepared to defend the legality of their proceedings.

" He has employed much of his wit to render

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me ridiculous, and to disparage my conduct by an absurd comparison of my character with that of Pisistratus. But in what particular have I ever shewn a desire to obtain illegal honours? God knows! the public have never offered me any pageantry of state, which, under the most treasonable direction, could in the least affect their welfare. Have I ever attempted to set myself above the laws of my country, or solicited any other honours than those I am competent to receive? The honourable gentleman, after flourishing much about body guards, and other matters of no greater consequence, talks of the Westminster committee's intention of constituting me king of Westminster. A sarcasm so foolish and idle deserves no other attention than that contempt which is the inseparable concomitant of nonsense. But I will tell the honourable gentleman, the Westminster committee, as well as the whole body of inhabitants who occupy this respectable city, wish for no other king than the king now upon the throne. They love that king with sincerity, and revere the constitution by which he reigns. And it is out of a fond, perhaps a foolish,

partiality for me, and because they rashly think me, in some degree, qualified to support that king and that constitution, that they have called me to be their representative in parliament in a manner not less to their honour than to mine. It is probably from a weak and ill-grounded opinion of my abilities that the electors of the city of Westminster preferred me to a court candidate supported by all the interest of the crown. And it is my duty, in return, to render my conduct an example of the most perfect and sincere gratitude. But can it be warrantably advanced, that, from this circumstance, I am imitating Pisistratus, or, by the countenance of the people, endeavouring to destroy their liberties? The electors of Westminster are pleased to think well of my efforts in parliament, and their good opinion naturally shews itself in acts of the most cordial affection and regard. Lost, almost, as the public cause seems to be, they are glad to find the representative of Westminster among the number of those true friends to liberty who best serve their country, and have determined to stand in the breach, and to resist the torrent of corruption which threatens

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to overwhelm whatever is yet valuable to the community in one general ruin. In order to accomplish this purpose, we have sacrificed our interests, our ambition, our views of emolument, and whatever else can gratify the mind of man or fall within the wish of human pride or human vanity. Let not, then, gentlemen, on whom places, pensions, titles, and rewards of every kind, are profusely heaped, grudge me or others the poor paltry comfort of a little popular applause. Let them not complain that the people hold my efforts to serve my country in some small degree of estimation; and though, in the warmth of their zeal and affection, they may accidentally use a phraseology which on any other occasion might not be culpable, impute it rather to their fervour of friendship than to my artifice. Were I naturally anxious after those obnoxious honours, opportunities have offered which I could not have neglected. In the time of the tumults, when it hard to say whether government were most potent or the people most frantic, did I utter word or say a syllable in support of the protestant association? On the contrary, I firmly opposed it, and was among the first to reprobate and

censure those lawless proceedings, which began by insulting the legislature, and did not end until the public prisons, and private property to an immense amount, were involved in one dreadful conflagration. When a measure* was in agitation, which was particularly the object of opposition from those whom, at that time, it was well known I wished to become my constituents, did I, with a view to court their approbation, meanly resign my opinion, or slavishly adopt theirs who have since chosen me their representative? Was it not notorious to every gentleman present who sat in the last parliament, that I stood up in my place, and firmly supported my sentiments; declaring, at the same time, that I trusted it would be a proof to the electors, that, in chusing me, they would send a representative to parliament who was at least sincere, and determined at all times and at all hazards to speak his real opinion? Are the open, undisguised, and unsolicited caresses of a brave and spirited people, objects, after all, which even that honourable gentleman can despise? It is one thing to deserve the plaudits

* Lord Beauchamp's bill for the relief of insolvent debtors,

of

of our fellow-citizens, and another to take advantage of popular outrage, and meanly court their praise by pampering their wishes. The one is an object of ambition which I am not ashamed to pursue. My conduct, in a great variety of instances, offers the fullest proof that I scorn to stoop to the other. It is no wonder, however, that ministers and the abettors of ministers, find themselves hurt on the occasion. They are no longer able to resist that popular torrent which threatens their downfall. They see the tide accumulating, and are only vexed and irritated that the means of escape are no longer within their reach. They could not now, as formerly, either imagine or assert, that the aggregate body of the people was on their side. The city of Westminster and the county of Surry have, at last, fairly convinced them, that their interest with the people is for ever at an end.

" Much offence is taken with my style of debate. I have never copied, nor ever will copy, any other standard than what is suggested to my feelings from the nature, circumstances, and occasion,

casion, of the subject in question. I own myself bound, as well from politeness as decency, to abstain from whatever can be candidly interpreted into a personality. But I never will consider the allusions I may be led to make to men in public situations, as coming under such a description. I appeal to the speaker, who is competent to determine, whether I have been more than commonly guilty of a charge thus confidently imputed to my conduct. I have doubtless been hurried, as others often are, by occasional warmth, into many expressions and phrases, which, on cool and mature reflection, I will not attempt to justify. But attacks on men, appointed to stations for which they are notoriously inadequate, are not to be viewed in this obnoxious light. Ministers ought not to prefer their friends to the public utility; nor ought their friends to accept of preferment under any such predicament. This observation I mention on purpose to obviate an exception that may possibly be made to my conduct, should I be forced to advert to the character of a person [sir Hugh Palliser], who, if report may be credited, and there can be found constituents sufficiently abandoned,

abandoned, and lost to all sense of honour, to chuse him for their representative, is shortly to come among us. The person to whom I allude, has been convicted, by one court martial, of having preferred a false and malicious accusation against his superior officer; and tried for his conduct by another court martial, who acquitted him neither honourably nor unanimously. These trials are matters of public notoriety, and fit subjects of parliamentary allusion and free discussion. To these I shall have occasion to refer, in my animadversion on the conduct of government, whenever the supply for the support of the navy comes under debate. Nor had that gentleman, or any other honourable gentleman, the least right to complain of personal insult, since their own behaviour had rendered it impossible to speak of public affairs without referring to them. Were I to prefer an indictment, accusing any one of a crime, none surely but the most wrong-headed man in the world would deem the hard words, which constitute the technical phraseology of the charge stated against him, so many affronts to him as a gentleman;—the case of my treating

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on any public topic, in which individuals are concerned, in this house, is precisely of a similar nature. And without freedom of speech there can be no discussion.

"I own I was not a little surprised to hear the honourable gentleman congratulate me on my having, in consequence of the Westminster committee resolution, an exclusive privilege of speaking personalities in this house. It is an imputation I have already denied, and am prepared to challenge any man, who dares assert it, to produce his proof. Had I indulged myself with entering into a dissertation on œconomy, and the well-ordered system of my private affairs, or talked of my ancestry, and alluded to my domestic habits and virtues, and pointed these important particulars at any individual gentleman, I should suppose I might then, with reason and propriety, have been accused of dealing in personalities. But surely so long as I confine myself to public matters only, I do not think the house will agree in thinking that the character of being fond of personalities belongs exclusively to me."

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The declaration of war against Holland, early in 1781, seemed to fill up the measure of evils which the impolitic system of his majesty's government had brought on the nation. When the subject was discussed in parliament, Mr. Fox contended, that all the calamities which had befallen the country, had originated in a departure from those wise principles of government which our ancestors had so gloriously and happily pursued. Had the true whig principles prevailed, as they did in the days of king William and queen Anne, at least in the first part of her reign, and in the two subsequent reigns, America, he said, would have been fighting by the side of Great Britain; or rather, the liberties of America not having been invaded, the occasion of all the quarrels that arose out of our unhappy contention with the colonies would have been prevented. But the interest of the prince, that is, of administration, he affirmed, was now conceived to be different from that of the people; the honour of the crown was to be maintained at the expense of the people; and provided they governed, the condition of those who obeyed was a matter

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of indifference. The reign of Charles II. had been called an infamous reign; but not one of the Stuarts had done so much mischief to the country as the present ministry.

Mr. Fox then proceeded to draw a parallel between the empress of Russia and his present majesty, who, he said, had ascended the thrones of their respective empires nearly about the same time. How great was the difference in the two reigns! Great Britain had declined with a suddenness equal to the rapidity with which Russia had risen to her present eminence. It was not want of capacity with which he charged administration; they had capacity; but it was all exhausted, not in foreign politics, which it was the business of rulers to attend to, but in managing that house, and in other similar transactions, wherein their own interest was the only point concerned. The war with Holland, an event peculiarly to be deprecated, contending as the nation was against the combined forces of the house of Bourbon, he considered as entirely the result of the misconduct of the ministry; and if they

they had been removed before, when their demerits became sufficiently apparent, he firmly believed that event would not have taken place.

On the 12th of June, Mr. Fox brought forward a motion, the object of which was, " That the house should resolve itself into a committee, to consider of the American war." He particularly urged, as a strong reason for entering at that time into an inquiry on the subject, that it was evident, from the very circumstances which attended our victories over the Americans, that the final subjugation of them was impracticable. It appeared, he said, by the recent despatches which had arrived from America, that though lord Cornwallis had done every thing he proposed, by penetrating into North Carolina; though he had been fortunate enough to come up with general Greene, had engaged, and defeated him, he had not found one good consequence result from his success, not being joined by any body of Americans, as he expected, nor even retaining the ground upon which he had conquered. It was therefore manifest, that the war in which we were engaged was

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at once impracticable in its object, and ruinous in its progress. If his motion for resolving the house into a committee should be adopted, it was his intention, he said, to follow it with another motion, that it should be resolved, " That his majesty's ministers ought immediately to take every possible measure for concluding peace with our American colonies."

Mr. Pitt, afterwards the great political rival of Mr. Fox, who had recently obtained a seat in the house of commons, and distinguished himself by his eloquent and manly support of those principles which had justly rendered the name of his illustrious father dear to the patriotic part of the nation, supported the motion in a speech of uncommon animation and brilliancy. Expressing himself with all the frankness, sincerity, and warmth of youth, he declared, in the most indignant and unqualified terms, his abhorrence of the cruelty and injustice of the American war. It was conceived, he said, in injustice; it was nurtured and brought forth in folly; and its footsteps were marked with blood, slaughter, persecution, and devastation.

devastation. Every thing that went to constitute moral depravity or human turpitude was to be found in its horrid train. It was pregnant with every kind of mischief; but, while it meditated destruction to the miserable people who were the devoted objects of the black resentment which produced it, the mischiefs recoiled on the unhappy people of this country, who were made the instruments to effect the wicked purposes of its authors. The nation was drained of its best blood, and of its vital resources of men and money. The expense was enormous, much beyond the experience of any former hostilities, and nothing was received in return but a series of ineffective victories, or severe defeats; victories only celebrated by temporary triumphs over our brethren, struggling in the holy cause of liberty; or defeats, which filled the land with mourning for the loss of dear and valuable relations, slain in the impious cause of enforcing unconditional submission on the inhabitants of a free country. Thus eloquently did Mr. Pitt, while yet unseduced by the sweets of power, vindicate the rights of humanity, and stand forth the liberal advocate of

the violated freedom of America. On the same occasion, Mr. Pratt, the present earl Camden, then a young member of the house of commons, made his first parliamentary essay in support of the motion, and, in a speech of considerable promise, expressed his full conviction of the pernicious tendency of the American war, and of the total impracticability of succeeding in the iniquitous design of subjugating the colonies. But the war was still too favourite an object with the crown to be relinquished, and the majority of the house were not yet convinced of its iniquity and folly. The motion was consequently rejected by a majority of 172 to 99.

In the course of the session Mr. Fox brought forward a bill for the amendment of the marriage act. By Mr. Fox's bill the necessity of publishing banns, or of having a licence, was taken away, when the parties were arrived at the age of eighteen in the male sex, and sixteen in the female; and no marriage was to be declared null, in or by any suit at law, after the parties had cohabited together as man and wife for one year.

Mr.

Mr. Fox supported his bill by a variety of cogent arguments. He painted the marriage act in the most odious colours, as a direct violation of the laws of God and Nature, as an act of despotism to which the powers of parliament could not constitutionally extend, as a source of private depopulation and vice, inefficacious as to the selfish contracted benefit meant to be derived from it, but ruinous as to the happiness of those who were the strength of every country, and whom it was the duty of every legislature to protect, the lower orders of the community. It originated, he said, in the sordid and mistaken principles of a few noble families, who, to gratify their avarice, pride, or ambition, framed restrictions oppressive to the people. They had been disappointed; for whoever could afford to pay the expense of a post chaise to Scotland, laughed at the provisions of the marriage act; while the poor, unable to avail themselves of that evasion, were either inhumanly crossed in their inclinations, or plunged into the abyss of vice.

He reprobated the idea of establishing an un-

natural authority in the parent, because his reason and experience were greater than those he was to govern; for this was the universal plea of despotism, public as well as private; thus was every system of tyranny defended, by urging, that it was better for the ignorant to be governed by the wise, than permit them to govern themselves. But the position was false and absurd. The most inexperienced and illiterate were more competent to know what constituted their own happiness, than any other mortal could possibly be; and where the passions were concerned, the heart of youth was wiser than the hoary head of age. Here he most pathetically described the different situations of youth, checked in the inclinations of their hearts, or indulging them contrary to prudence. In the latter case he shewed marriage to be the source of industry, and the first errour very frequently retrieved: in the former, he traced passion turning backwards into channels of vice; every finer feeling of the heart eradicated; and intemperance, the refuge of disappointed love, leading to the last stages of depravity. He maintained, with Swift, that there

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are two passions in the human heart designed by Nature to be stronger than reason, viz. the love of life, and the mutual desire subsisting between the sexes. That these should not be circumscribed by the frigid rules of prudence, he contended, was absolutely necessary for the preservation of our species; consequently to restrain them by human laws was counteracting and repealing the law of Heaven itself. Population never proceeded from reason, but from passion; for was a computation to be always made of the profit and loss likely to accrue from marriage, as the rule of our choice, few marriages would ever be made: but it was the triumph of passion to subdue every prudential feeling, and in consequence we often find the wisest men, in the affair of marriage, set reason out of the question.

He then divided his objections against the marriage act into two parts; one relative to the age limited therein, as years of discretion, which he thought far too late in life; and the other, respecting the penalty annexed to informal marriages, that of declaring them void, a principle

against which he strongly contended as a disgrace to our statute book, and one of the most inhuman that had ever been conceived.

On this occasion Mr. Fox had the satisfaction to find, that the sentiments of the majority of the house of commons were in unison with his own. The bill received little opposition, and was carried by a large majority: but in the house of lords, where the marriage act had originated, it had stronger prejudices to encounter, and in the end was rejected; not, however, without receiving the high commendations of several liberal minded and enlightened peers.

Previous to the ensuing session of parliament, which met on the 27th of November 1781, government received the mortifying intelligence, that the royal army in Virginia, under the command of earl Cornwallis, had been obliged to surrender prisoners of war. This event convinced the sober and reflecting part of the nation of the utter impracticability of prosecuting the war in America with any prospect of success, and served

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to cure many, who had been most sanguine in their hopes of colonial subjugation, of that mad and extravagant delusion. Ministers, and their corrupt adherents in parliament, alone continued blind and infatuated. Uncorrected by the fatal experience of the past, and obstinately perverse, in spite of all the accumulated calamities and disgrace that attended their measures, they determined to persevere in the contest. His majesty, in his speech from the throne, after deploring the events of the war, which he acknowledged had been very unfortunate to his arms in Virginia, having ended in the loss of his forces in that province, added, that the misfortune in that quarter called loudly for the firm concurrence and assistance of parliament, in order to frustrate the designs of their enemies, which, he affirmed, were equally prejudicial to the real interests of America, and to those of Great Britain.

The mover and seconder of the address, which, as usual, was couched in nearly the terms of the speech, having strongly contended for the neces-

sity of a vigorous prosecution of the war, Mr. Fox rose to move an amendment to the address.

There never was a time, he said, so necessary as the present, to observe, that the speech from the throne was to be considered not as the speech of the king, but of the minister. He had expected, and it had been the general expectation of many others, that the speech would have held a very different tone; that they should have heard his majesty declare from the throne, "that he had been deceived and imposed upon by misinformation and misrepresentation; that, in consequence of his delusion, the parliament had been deluded, but now the delusion was at an end. He saw that he had been in an errour, and that he and his people had suffered enough from the consequences of it; and therefore he requested his parliament to devise the most speedy and direct means of putting an end to the public calamities, and of restoring peace, security, and happiness to his dominions." Instead of a speech of this moderate and conciliating nature, so suitable to the circumstances of the nation, they had heard one

which

which breathed little else than rancour, vengeance, misery, and bloodshed. Those who were ignorant of the personal character of the monarch, and who imagined that this speech originated from himself, might be led to suppose that he was an unfeeling despot, rejoicing in the horrid sacrifice of the liberty and existence of his subjects. The speech, upon a fair construction, might be understood to convey this meaning: "Our losses have been singularly calamitous. The blood of my subjects has flowed in copious and unavailing streams. The treasures of the country have been thrown away, and the weight of taxes imposed, with such a heavy hand, upon an overburthened and sinking people, is grown at length almost intolerable. Yet I will tax you to the last shilling. When all hope of victory is fled for ever, and the operations of the war must accelerate the ruin of the empire, I will forbid you to think of peace; for my thirst of conquest is not quenched; my revenge is unsated; and nothing short of the total subjugation of my opponents is capable of appeasing it." When all ranks of people imagined that their benign monarch would have

cheered

cheered them with the glad tidings of a determination to seek for peace, and have confessed that the prospect of succeeding in the present mode of carrying on the war was vanished for ever, how great must be their astonishment and concern to find, that we must pursue it at all events, nor be allowed to rest until we have totally lost the power of contending with the forces that have combined against us.

Mr. Fox then proceeded to make some severe animadversions on the conduct of ministers, which were recollected and brought forward much to his disadvantage, when, at a future period, he formed a coalition with some of the very ministers whose demerits he at this time so violently impeached. Some allowance, however, should be made for the warmth of debate. If ministers, he proceeded, were entitled to any recompense for their services, they ought to receive it from France, whose battles they might be considered as having fought, and to whose aggrandizement they had more largely contributed than all her boasted victories under the reign of Louis XIV.

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The present ministry had been notorious for their ignorance, their inactivity, their tameness, and their corruption. They had been the bane of this country, over the affairs of which they had been permitted too long to preside. But the time, continued he, would surely come, when an oppressed and irritated people would call for signal punishment on those whose pernicious councils had sunk the nation in almost irretrievable destruction. An indignant nation would surely, in the end, compel them to make some faint atonement for the magnitude of their offences on a public scaffold. Was it not evident that they had lost our valuable possessions in North America; and separated us, perhaps for ever, from those who were once our fellow subjects, and endeared to us by a variety of ties, now all consumed in the flames of an unnatural, frantic, and disastrous war? They had driven us to the point of losing our settlements in the West Indies, and shewed themselves incapable of succouring either Minorca or Gibraltar. They had destroyed our commerce, and rendered us a mark of scorn and ridicule to all the states of Europe.

Europe. They had robbed us of the once undisputed sovereignty of the sea, an unrivalled power, in consequence of which we were at the same time envied, feared, and respected by surrounding nations.

On the subject of the surrender of earl Cornwallis, Mr. Fox remarked, that although that gallant commander merited the warmest encomiums, and deserved to be received with open arms by all parties, yet there existed, in another quarter, instances of neglect that called for the severest reprehension. Two years were just elapsed since a right honourable gentleman moved that our troops might be recalled from America, and foretold what has actually happened, that the colonists fighting by the side of the French would bear away the palm of victory from our soldiers. On the military merits of earl Cornwallis it was needless to expatiate. Yet it seemed natural to fear, that however loudly administration now sounded his praise, they would, in the end, assume the liberty of censuring his proceedings. For the sake of an intrepid officer, he thought

thought it requisite to caution ministers, lest they should attempt hereafter to asperse his reputation. The shameful precedent was in the recollection of every one who heard him. When a brave commander [general Burgoyne] obtained a victory at Ticonderago, the ministers were at a loss for language to praise his gallantry and good conduct; but how soon afterwards did they vilify his character? It was observed by a right honourable gentleman [Mr. Rigby] in the last session, that if the capture of Charlestown produced no sensible effect, he should grow sick of the American war! This was the time to inquire what the capture of Charlestown had really produced. It had produced a victory over seven thousand men, the flower of the British troops, all becoming prisoners of war. It was natural then to expect that the right honourable gentleman would raise his voice against the continuance of this destructive war, since even our victories were nothing more than the forerunners of hopeless defeats. The victory at Camden led to the disgrace at Yorktown. The successes at Ticonderago were lost in the capitulation of Saratoga.

Mr.

Mr. Fox was most pointedly severe on the conduct of the first lord of the admiralty [the earl of Sandwich]. To him, he said, might be ascribed the humiliating situation into which earl Cornwallis had been thrown. When cut off from the usual opportunity of re-embarking afforded to unsuccessful armies by British fleets, he had no alternative but either to perish on the spot, or surrender to a victorious enemy. The ocean had hitherto been considered as a place of sure protection to our land forces. But our once invincible dominion of the sea was extinguished. In America, as elsewhere, the British squadrons were inferior to those of France; and so covered with incapability and disgrace was the naval power of Great Britain, that administration had dared to represent it as meritorious, that our fleets had dexterously contrived to keep clear from giving battle to the enemy. At former periods her fleets, that covered the seas, were never found returning to port without the brilliant trophies of victory. Mr. Fox most distinctly acquitted our naval commanders in America of all blame, and said the whole was chargeable on the incapacity,

negligence,

negligence, or treachery of the first lord of the admiralty.

The mover and seconder of the address strongly recommended unanimity to the house. This Mr. Fox contended was a gross insult to the understanding and principles of the members of the opposition, who had, with equal rectitude and uniformity, endeavoured to defeat the baneful measures of administration. When they expatiated on the consequences that would inevitably result from the continuance of the war against America; when they truly prophesied that earl Cornwallis and his army would fall at length, in spite of their victory at Camden, an easy prey to the combined forces of America and France, the ministerial reply was, "let us be unanimous, and we may set our enemies at defiance." That delusion he trusted was now over. No member, Mr. Fox affirmed, was more anxious than himself for the prevalence of a spirited and irreproachable unanimity, but he should be sorry that it took place on any other than the fundamental principle of terminating the American war, and inflicting punishment

punishment upon the authors of it. Mr. Fox concluded with moving an amendment to the address, " That the commons would, without delay, apply themselves with united hearts to digest and propose such councils as might, in the present crisis, excite the efforts, point the arms, and, by a total change of system, command the confidence of all his majesty's subjects." After a long debate Mr. Fox's amendment was rejected by a majority of 218 to 129.

But however discouraging to the hopes of the opposition this commencement of the session might be, it by no means occasioned them to slacken in their efforts to procure a change of men and measures in his majesty's councils. Previous to the house going into a committee of supply, it was warmly contended by opposition that the commons ought not to grant any supplies to the crown, until some pledge was given, that those measures would no longer be persisted in, which had unhappily brought Great Britain into her present state of degradation. Mr. Fox asserted in the the strongest terms the constitutional right

right of the people to withhold all succours whatsoever, unless the grievances which pressed so heavily on them were removed, and he contended that the period was arrived when it would be proper for the house of commons to exercise that right. He ridiculed the idea, that a temporary suspension of the grant of the supplies must strike with dangerous violence against the interests of the state, as too absurd to deserve a laboured refutation. It would suffice to ask, he said, whether the national misfortunes, which thickened over the course of the preceding year, could possibly have proved more numerous and affecting, if no money whatever had been granted for the service of the war? What benefits had accompanied the last year's enormous dissipation of the public treasure? If the present ministry should still retain their posts, what future triumphs could we expect? What advantages could result from any votes for troops, if the destination and employment of them were to be entrusted to the secretary of state for the American department? Could the noble lord [lord George Germain] who occupied that depart-

ment, give any satisfactory assurance to the house, that the military forces which should hereafter be sent across the Atlantic, would be more successfully or more honourably employed than those that had already been sent thither? Did he wish to despatch a third army to America, that general Washington might receive them as prisoners of war? Did he wish that more British troops should be devoted, if not to slaughter, at least to sure captivity and indelible disgrace? Notwithstanding the defeat and dishonour which had attended the measures of administration, they had yet discovered no signs of humiliation or penitence. Instead of acknowledging that they turned their eyes, with inquietude and shame, upon the criminal expenditure of fruitless millions, they did not blush to move for an increase of grants, that they might prosecute, until ruin should stop their hideous career, hostilities, which were the result of barbarous ambition, of most implacable and unprovoked malevolence, of wishes to destroy the natural rights of mankind, of insuperable avarice, and of a contempt for all the principles

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of equity and honour. Not the least evidence of remorse, nor any token of amendment, could be gathered either from the words or from the actions of those in administration. They gloried in their crimes, and, scorning to retract, they solicited the house, at once, for means to nourish, to strengthen, and to extend them. It had been said, that since the revolution, no instance could be found of a refusal to grant the supply. The assertion was well grounded; but, he would ask, had there ever been a period like the present since the revolution? Had there ever been a reign so unfortunate? A change of circumstances required a change of conduct. Had there ever been a circumstance so paradoxical as a parliament resolving that the influence of the crown ought to be diminished, without being able to effect a diminution? A variety of circumstances now rendered it an act of absolute necessity, that the people, awakened to a sense of their injuries, should call with an united voice for the immediate and total restitution of their violated rights. It seemed an inauspicious omen, that the early periods of the present reign were

marked by augmentations of the revenues of the crown; and whilst the internal expenses of government stood forward upon the amplest scale, every exterior settlement of Great Britain was either weakened, diminished, or fallen into the hands of our enemies. Whilst the sovereign was much richer than any of his predecessors, his people were daily more and more the victims of accumulated poverty, and sunk under the redoubled load of taxes. In such a state of things, therefore, it was the duty of the national representatives to refuse any grants to the crown, until some evidence were given that a change of system and of conduct would be adopted.—On a division the motion for postponing the supply was rejected by a large majority.

Early after the Christmas recess, a series of motions were made by Mr. Fox for an inquiry, in the first instance, into the conduct of the first lord of the admiralty (the earl of Sandwich), and, in the next, for an address to his majesty, praying him to dismiss that nobleman from the royal councils for ever. Mr. Fox was supported in his motions

motions by the naval characters of the greatest weight in the house, by admiral Keppel and lord Howe, and had nearly carried his last motion, the majority in favour of the first lord of the admiralty being only 19, in an exceeding full house, consisting of 453 members.

This was one of the last triumphs of lord North's administration. On the 22d of February general Conway made a motion, "That a humble address should be presented to his majesty, earnestly imploring his majesty to take into his royal consideration the many and great calamities that had befallen his people in consequence of the war; that he would be graciously pleased to listen to the humble prayer and advice of his faithful commons, and give directions to his ministers not to pursue any longer the impracticable object of reducing his majesty's revolted colonies, by force, to their allegiance, by a war on the continent of America; and to assure his majesty, that his faithful commons would cheerfully concur with him in such measures as might be thought necessary to accelerate the blessing of

peace." This motion occasioned long and warm debates in the house of commons, in the course of which Mr. Fox particularly distinguished himself, and was, in the end, lost by a single vote, the numbers who voted against the motion being 194 to 193 who supported it. Encouraged by what could not but be considered as a victory over the ministers, Mr. Fox immediately gave notice, that the question respecting the farther prosecution of the American war would be brought before the house again, in another form, in the course of a few days.

Accordingly, on the 27th of the month, general Conway's motion was revived, under a somewhat different form, in order to meet the rules of the house, and was carried by a majority of 19. This may be considered as having given the final blow to the American war; but ministers lingered in office till the 19th of March, when, to prevent a vote of censure on their conduct, which was to have been made by the earl of Surrey, and, in the then temper of the house, would probably have been carried, lord North, in behalf of himself

self and his colleagues, declared, that his majesty had come to a full determination to change his servants, and that ministers only retained their places for the purpose of transacting the official business of the state, until other ministers were appointed to fill their situations.

It must be within the knowledge of all who are acquainted with the parliamentary history of this period, one of the most interesting in our annals, whether we consider the magnitude of the questions which divided the rival parties, or the equality of strength, or rather the dubious majorities, with which each alternately vindicated their separate opinions, that Mr. Fox's exertions were unrivalled in the house. In the contests alluded to, he seldom spoke in the early part of the debate, but reserved himself for the conclusion, to expose the fallacies of the venal adherents of the minister, or refute the objections brought forward against the arguments of his friends. This is usually reckoned one of the most difficult parts of oratory; and it would not be easy, without entering at greater length than the design

of this work will permit, into the arguments of the ministerial speakers, to give a clear view of the eloquence, energy, and spirit, with which Mr. Fox refuted his opponents, and exposed their errours.

In the new ministerial arrangement, Mr. Fox, as might naturally be expected, was called to occupy a distinguished post. His splendid talents, his liberal principles, his comprehensive mind, but, above all, his unwearied exertions in the cause of the people, rendered him justly so popular, that any arrangement which could have taken place would have been regarded as incomplete, which did not include him in one of the most responsible offices of the state. Accordingly, on the 27th of March, he received the seals as secretary of state for the foreign department, and was sworn a member of the privy council.

The head of the new administration, or the prime minister, if we may so call him, though it may safely be affirmed that the office is unknown to the British constitution, was the marquis of Rockingham,

Rockingham, a nobleman every way qualified to fill that high and arduous situation. The virtues of his private life were becoming his rank and means. Possessed of one of the most ample fortunes in the kingdom, he employed it liberally and munificently, and even impoverished his great estate by the exercise of an almost unbounded generosity of disposition. In public life the character of this eminent person was equally amiable and respectable. As a statesman his qualities were more solid and useful than brilliant. He was above all chicane or dissimulation, and carried into the cabinet with him, pure and unsullied, all those high principles of honour, rectitude, and disinterestedness, which so remarkably adorned his private conduct. He had before, in 1765, filled the same post to which he was now appointed, that of first lord of the treasury, and during his administration, which was distinguished by the wise measure of the repeal of the stamp act, he displayed, to quote the elegant panegyric of Mr. Burke, whom he had the honour and good fortune to introduce into public life, "such sound principles, such an enlargement of mind, such clear

clear and sagacious sense, and such unshaken fortitude, as to bind a most extensive and honourable party of men, by an inviolable attachment to him from that time forward." The seals of state for the home department were given to the earl of Shelburne, a nobleman of whom we shall have occasion to speak more at large hereafter. The other members of the new administration were composed of that description of individuals who usually make up the rank and file of a cabinet, and may be regarded, without injury to their characters, as the sleeping partners of the ministerial firm. But on the whole, it was almost universally felt and acknowledged, that the nation had not seen an administration of more flattering promise, or on which better hopes were built, since the period of his majesty's accession to the throne.

The first object of the new ministry was to endeavour to put an end to the calamities of war. The empress of Russia having offered her mediation between Great Britain and the United States, Mr. Fox, two days after his entrance into office, addressed the following letter to M. Simolin, the Russian

Russian minister in London, which is marked with all that manly simplicity, frankness, and good faith, which so eminently distinguish the whole of the diplomatic correspondence of this incomparable statesman.

" Sir, March 22, 1782.

" Having laid before his majesty an extract of the letter which you did me the honour, sir, of communicating from prince Gallitzin and Mons. de Marcoff, I have his majesty's commands to inform you, that the king, desirous of testifying his intention toward their high mightinesses, and of renewing that friendship which has been so unfortunately interrupted between old allies, who ought to be united in the bonds of mutual interest, is ready to enter into a negociation, for the purpose of setting on foot a treaty of peace, on the terms and conditions of that which was agreed to in 1674, between his majesty and the republic; and that the better to facilitate the execution of a plan which his majesty has so much at heart, the king is willing to give immediate orders for a suspension of hostilities, if, on their part, the

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lords the states general should think such a measure suitable to the object in view.

" I am commanded by his majesty to explain to you, sir, his sentiments on so important a subject, and desire you will impart the same to the ministers of her imperial majesty to their high mightinesses, that they may be conveyed without the least delay to the ministers of the republic; being of opinion that it is the most convenient step, with the mediation and good offices of her imperial majesty, to put an end to the scourge of that war, which unfortunately subsists between the two nations.

" I have the honour to be,
with the most perfect consideration,
sir,
your most humble and most obedient servant,
C. J. FOX."

This letter was represented by the enemies of the new ministry as derogatory to the interest and dignity of Great Britain; but on a subsequent

quent occasion Mr. Fox vindicated himself on the enlarged and liberal principle, that, as he had been of opinion, that the Dutch had been dragged into the war without any just cause, so he thought it the duty of England to make them large offers of peace. Accordingly a second letter was addressed to the Russian ambassador, stating in more explicit terms the conditions on which his majesty was disposed to treat with the republic of Holland, which we subjoin:

" Sir, St. James's, 4th May, 1782.

" I have not at all delayed to lay before his majesty the communication which you did me the honour of making to me on the first of this month. His majesty has received it as a fresh mark of the friendship of her imperial majesty, and as a proof of the lively and sincere interest which she takes in the restoration of the peace of Great Britain and her ancient ally. I believe it will be needless to remark to you, sir, that his majesty has understood, with the greatest satisfaction, that he has adjusted his councils in all points conformable to the measures which his majesty had already taken to second the good

offices of the court of Petersburgh. The king moreover promises himself that her imperial majesty understands with pleasure that he has anticipated her counsels, in having offered to the Hollanders the entire liberty of navigation, according to the treaty of 1674 between Great Britain and the republic, a treaty by which the principles of the armed neutrality are established in their widest extent, to all the contracting parties. His majesty then does not make any difficulty to say, that he will accept as the basis of a separate peace between him and the states general, a free navigation, according to the principles demanded by her imperial majesty, in her declaration of the 28th of February 1780.

" Give me leave to remark, sir, that in communicating these his majesty's sentiments to you, I think I do no more than repeat what I had the honour to write to you on the 29th of March last. If that letter has not produced the effects which her imperial majesty seemed to promise herself from such a step towards a reconciliation, and on which alone, according to the report of the ministers

ministers of her imperial majesty at the Hague, the republic made the negociation for a peace with Great Britain to depend; and if, notwithstanding the moderation which his majesty has taken pains to prove on this occasion, in terms the least equivocal, the republic shall persist to oppose every idea of a separate peace, the king will always have the satisfaction of having acted in such a manner as to manifest the high value he sets on the friendship of her imperial majesty, and the respect he has for her councils.

"I have the honour to be, &c.

"C. J. Fox."

The states general, however, refused to listen to any overtures for a separate peace, and therefore Mr. Fox and his friends no longer thought them entitled to that generosity of conduct, which they had thus so haughtily rejected. But no time was lost by the new ministers to evince their pacific disposition towards the other powers at war. Almost immediately upon their entrance into office, Mr. Grenville was sent to Paris, invested with full powers to treat with all the parties

parties at war; and, to offer every facility to so desirable an object as a general peace, he was directed, in the first instance, to propose the acknowledgment of the independence of the United provinces of America, without making it a condition of a general treaty. The British commanders in America were at the same time directed to acquaint the congress with the pacific views of his majesty's servants, and of the offer that was made to acknowledge the independence of the United States.

The policy pursued by the new administration with regard to the internal concerns of the empire, was strictly consistent with the principles which they had maintained when in opposition, and from the open and eloquent avowal of which they derived the confidence and support of the most respectable and independent members of both houses of parliament, with the warm and generous approbation of a large majority out of doors. Among the other wise and patriotic measures brought forward during the short continuance of Mr. Fox and his friends in power, may

may be mentioned with complacence, as we continue to feel the advantages of them, the act which gave to Ireland the blessing of a free and independent constitution, the act for restraining the officers of the customs and excise from voting at elections, and Mr. Burke's bill for the abolition of various useless offices of state, and the reform of the civil list expenditure.

Mr. Fox, at a meeting of his constituents, soon after his resignation, speaking in approbation of these great measures, acknowledged that the party with whom he acted had made large and ample promises when in opposition, and the public, in the persuasion of their sincerity, by many great and repeated exertions, had at last got the government lodged in their hands. Did the people, he asked, in the honest boldness of conscious integrity, find them different in office from what they had been when out of power? Were they not assiduous and constant in their attention to those capital and leading particulars so interesting to the nation in general, and so much at heart with themselves, and on which they considered

their own honour and consequence to depend? What was expected from them which they did not employ all their influence and address to accomplish the moment they were in power? They had repeatedly exclaimed against the growing influence of the crown, especially as unduly exerted at elections. Had they not taken the most effectual means they could to abridge it, by a bill which expelled from the house of commons all contractors of whatever description or denomination? What made the boroughs of this kingdom such a dead weight on a fair and equitable representation of the people? By the swarms of customhouse and excise officers who nestled in them, their delegates were certainly a representation of the crown, or ministry, rather than of the people. To put a final period to this obvious enormity, a bill had likewise passed, under their short administration, by which they were wholly incapacitated for voting on any such occasion whatever. Still a numerous list of places or sinecures remained at the minister's disposal, by which he always had it in his power to swell the public expenditure almost as much as he pleased. On this

this account, and to cure as much as was possible a most general and threatening evil, Mr. Burke's reform bill, which went to the abolition of a great many useless offices, had been carried through both houses of parliament, and obtained the royal assent. He and his friends, therefore, did not fear to be tried by the performance of those promises which they had repeatedly and solemnly made. And he was bold to affirm, that the public expectation had, in no instance, been disappointed by their means. This test of men and measures was alike intelligible to all: it was universally and clearly understood, and it was a test to which he, and those who acted on true public principles, would always readily and chearfully appeal.

To these valuable and popular edicts, continued Mr. Fox, which would have distinguished any administration of as many years continuance as this was months, ought to be added the complete and substantial emancipation of Ireland, from that illiberal and contracted policy under which she had so long and ignominiously groaned. This

opprobrium of the British government, which has remained for ages a standing satire on our attachment to political independence, is now fully and for ever annihilated. The period arrived at last, when that liberty, which has so frequently fed and circulated in warm streams round the heart, was destined to communicate life and vigour to the extremities of the empire. Ireland felt, and availed herself of, a crisis peculiarly propitious to her wishes. Fortunately for her, the government was no longer in the hands of men who scorned to become wise by experience, but under the management of those who had seen enough of complimenting one part of the empire at the expense of another. They deemed us all equally freemen, and thought the truest dignity of Great Britain, the pride of Englishmen, and the honour of the constitution, consisted in extending the great privileges of liberty and law, and maintaining them equally, essentially, and unimpaired, in every part of the empire, and among every order and description of his majesty's subjects. They were averse from sporting with the feelings of a great, injured, and impatient

people

people. They conceived it to be as much our interest as it was theirs, to make a merit of necessity, and comply readily and freely with the full extent of their demands. This was an instance, in point, that they were at least as much attached to the privileges of the many as to the exemptions of the few, to the rights of humanity as to the claims of government, and to the unalienable franchises of liberty as to the various and proud usurpations of legislation. A miserable system had long kept them poor, that we might be rich; but they were no longer to be treated as slaves and dependents. That system was now happily exchanged for a better; and the servants of the crown thought the freedom of Ireland the best monument and the surest pledge of our own.

Such were the leading transactions of the ministry during the short period that Mr. Fox and his friends continued in office. But the high expectations which the people had conceived from so wise and patriotic a commencement of the new ministerial reign, were fatally overcast by the death of the marquis of Rockingham,

which took place on the 1st of July 1782, and the disunion which followed in the cabinet, upon the loss of that lamented nobleman. The vacant post of first lord of the treasury was bestowed on the earl of Shelburne, so much against the wishes of Mr. Fox, and those more particularly connected with him on public principles, who were desirous that the duke of Portland should have been placed at the head of the treasury, that he immediately resigned his place, and was followed by lord John Cavendish, Mr. Burke, Mr. Frederick Montague, and other distinguished characters.

Various motives were assigned for Mr. Fox's secession from office. By some it was censured as rash and precipitate; and condemned by others as originating not in pure and patriotic motives, but in feelings of wounded pride and disappointed ambition. It would be injustice to his memory to offer any other defence for his conduct, than that which he himself made at the time, a defence which carried conviction with it, to every honest, upright, and impartial mind, of the honour of his feelings,

feelings, of the purity of his principles, and of the disinterestedness of his patriotism.

The subject of Mr. Fox's resignation was fully discussed in the house of commons, a few days after that event took place, and the reasons which had urged him to that step distinctly stated. On few occasions was the public curiosity ever more eagerly displayed. The gallery of the house and all the avenues leading to it were filled at an early hour with personages of the first rank and consideration, and the most profound silence ensued when Mr. Fox rose.

After some remarks on a pension that had been granted to colonel Barre, in seeming contradiction to the œconomic principles on which the Rockingham ministry had come into power, and which Mr. Fox defended, he observed, that he considered his resignation as a necessary step, when he found himself in a cabinet, that was divided upon points to his apprehension of the utmost importance. Without treachery to his country, he could not remain in power, when such opinions were held,

and such a system was to be begun, as appeared to him to be dangerous, if not fatal. He thought himself bound to answer to his country for his conduct, in having withdrawn himself from a cabinet, which had been formed by the firmness and opinion of the country, at so critical and alarming a period. When he entered that cabinet, he considered himself as pledged to his country for the system to be pursued. He was in that situation which demanded the most fair, direct, and explicit mode of proceeding. It was his disposition so to act; and in the discharge of his duty to his king and country, he was most anxiously solicitous, that the principles upon which the ministry came in, should be most religiously and implicitly observed. What then was to be done, when to his plain and evident conviction, these principles were departed from by some of those ministers? Was it not his immediate duty to retire from a situation, in which he could no longer act with honour to himself, or service to his country? When he saw that there was no prospect of those principles being any longer pursued, upon which the administration had been framed;

framed; when he was farther confirmed in his opinion by seeing that his immediate friends were equally alarmed, and saw with the same eyes that he did; he then felt it to be his immediate duty to retire from his post, and instantly to come forward, and declare the suspicions he entertained, in order to warn the house against the system which was to be revived. Having to answer to that house for the exact system which they had pointed out, in the formation of the ministry of which he made a part; and having declared that he should certainly depart from that cabinet, whenever the cabinet should depart from that system, he now felt it his duty to come forward and declare, that he had quitted his situation and resigned, because he believed the day was come, when the system was to be abandoned, when new opinions and a new system were to be formed, or rather when the old one was to be revived. He could not, for obvious reasons, enter into a detail of the matters which had given rise to this difference between himself and others who had retired, and those who remained in his majesty's councils. He could only say, *that there were*

several

several points on which they had most materially differed; and that he should have considered himself as guilty of the most direct treachery to his country, if he had, after this difference, continued any longer to hold out his name and support to an administration, which was not pursuing the line chalked out for them by that house, and by the people of England. His situation was so peculiar in that house, that he should have been unpardonable, if he had been mean enough to submit to continue in a situation, which he could not hold for the service of his country. For it was to him in particular that that house would look, as from his situation he had to come down with the measures of the cabinet; and, therefore, under those circumstances, he felt it to be indispensably necessary, that he should come forward, and ring the alarum bell, and tell the country, that the principles on which they had, with due deliberation, formed this administration, were abandoned, and that the old system was to be revived, most probably with the old men, or indeed with any men that could be found.

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As for himself, it certainly was not without reluctance that he had quitted the station he had lately held. He was not insensible to those distinctions which it gave him. He was neither incapable of vanity, nor of ambition. He had the vanity to be pleased with the applause of the good and the virtuous, and the ambition to be serviceable to his country. But there were considerations superior both to his vanity and ambition, the considerations of duty and of conscience. A sense of the duty which he owed to that house and to his country had induced him to warn them of the danger which he saw approaching; and he had the consolation of reflecting, that, if his country was to be ruined by a renewal of that system, which it had been the labour of years to demolish, it was not owing to him. It was from such considerations as these, that though in circumstances, in point of fortune, by no means enviable, he had relinquished the pomp, the profits, and the patronage of office. But these were not the most painful sacrifices he had made: he had also the misfortune to lose many of his dearest friends. But they were lost,

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he trusted, only for a time; because he was convinced, that the professions which had been made to them, and the delusions which had been held out, though they had imposed upon them now, could not deceive them long. Their sagacity would at length penetrate through the disguise, and the arts of those by whom this country was now to be governed; and they would come over to his opinion, though perhaps not till they had given a sanction by their names to an administration, that would more fatally undo the country, than any that was ever formed, or suffered to exist in Great Britain. They were men who thought nothing of promises which they had made; of engagements into which they had entered; of the principles which they had maintained; or of the system on which they had set out. They were men whom neither promises could bind, nor principles of honour secure; they would abandon fifty principles for the sake of power, and forget fifty promises, when they were no longer necessary to their ends. He had no doubt, but that to secure themselves in the power which they had obtained only by the labour of

others,

others, they would now strive to strengthen themselves by any means which corruption could procure; and he expected in a short time to see, that they would be joined by those very men, whom that house had precipitated from their seats. He had, however, this consolation, that though this new system might go on for days, weeks, months, or for years, it must like the last crumble into atoms, as all administrations and systems must do, which were not founded in public virtue and in honour.

General Conway (a member of the cabinet, and commander in chief of the forces) rose to reply to Mr. Fox. He began by lamenting that a difference of opinion should have deprived his majesty of the splendid talents of his right honourable friend; but denied that the disagreement in the cabinet was sufficient to justify him in withdrawing from it. When eleven cabinet ministers were assembled in council, it was impossible that there should not be some shades of difference in opinion; but, when this difference was not of an important nature, to retire from the cabinet

cabinet was a measure, in his mind, not to be justified. For his part, he had not perceived any departure from those principles, which had been the basis of the administration, an administration which he believed to have been the most popular of any that had ever been formed in this or any other country. If he had perceived any such departure, he would not only have applauded his right honourable friend for having withdrawn himself, but would have accompanied him in his retreat.

The leading principles by which he understood the cabinet was to be governed, whether under the auspices of the marquis of Rockingham or the earl of Shelburne, were, that the independence of America should be unconditionally acknowledged; that a new and regular system of œconomy should be forthwith adopted in every branch of the public expenditure; that the independence of the Irish legislature, as acknowledged by the repeal of the 6th of Geo. I. should be established on the most permanent foundation; that a reform should take place in the civil list and other departments

partments of state; and that the most effectual steps should be taken for diminishing the influence of the crown in both houses of parliament.

These, he said, were the great and fundamental principles upon which the administration had been formed; they were his principles, and as long as they were adhered to, ministers should have his support: but, if ever it should be resolved in council to depart from any one of them, he would rest satisfied to be pronounced the most infamous of men, if he should continue to act for one moment longer with those who could come to such a resolution. For his part he did not mind men; he would never take any share in a scramble or quarrel for places, pensions, or power; he did not care who were the members of the cabinet, or who enjoyed power, provided that those principles which he had stated as the fundamental points of the new administration were strictly adhered to. *He looked to measures only, and not to men.* He lamented as much as any man the death of the noble marquis, which had occasioned the late division; but he

saw

saw no ground for apprehension, that his successor would not steadily pursue the true interest of his country; that he would not strictly adhere to the great leading principle relative to America, which he had stated to that house. The noble lord in question [earl of Shelburne] was not satisfied with bringing himself to think favourably of American independence, to which the change of affairs had made him a convert; but he went farther, and he had persuaded the king to think favourably of it also. He therefore was at a loss to discover the essential ground of difference in the cabinet, or the cause that had occasioned the secession of his right honourable friend.

Mr. Fox, in reply, expressed his hope that the house would excuse him, if he should rise a second time, to exculpate himself from so heavy a charge as that of having quitted the service of the public without cause, and ascribed a conduct or intention to the cabinet which they had a right to disclaim. It seemed, he said, to have been insinuated, that disappointment in a contest for power and place, had been the true

cause

cause of his retreat from the present administration; but he was happy to have it in his power to answer this charge effectually, by assuring the house, that *he had in a full cabinet council expressly declared, that, if such and such measures should be adopted, he must necessarily resign his employment.* This declaration he had made previous to the death of the marquis of Rockingham. If he did not actually resign before that melancholy event took place, it was because he would not embitter the last moments of a venerable friend, by taking a step which he knew would give him the greatest uneasiness: but to prove that the probability of the death of that great and good man had no influence whatever upon him in his resolution to resign, he had said, when there was every hope given by the faculty that the noble marquis was likely to recover, that he had on the very day when these delusive tidings had been brought to the cabinet, positively declared that he must retire, if such a particular measure should be adopted. He was out voted in the council, and that measure was adopted. Now, as he looked upon that measure

to be in the last degree dangerous, he owed it to himself and to his country, not to remain any longer in a situation, in which he could not continue to act, without renouncing his principles, or betraying his trust with the public. He stood in a delicate situation: it had often been said, that while he himself and some other men should continue in office, it would be looked on as a pledge that nothing was going forward that could be injurious to the public interest. Must he not, therefore, have deceived those who looked upon his continuance in office as such a pledge, if he should have consented to retain his situation, while measures were pursuing which he thought highly injurious to the public good?

Mr. Fox lamented the necessity he was under of recalling the attention of the house to a great variety of particulars, which, as he thought, had already been fully stated. The weight of the honourable general's character, and his singular ingenuity, might give a turn or colour to facts, to the fallacy of which every mind might not, at first sight, be sufficiently awakened. Several things

things of this kind had fallen from him, to which, therefore, he hoped, he should be allowed to make some reply. To the political creed, which had been read to the house, with so much solemnity, he was no party. His majesty's ministers were not agreed on any such system while he was with them. To bring them unanimously to some such specific and decisive point, he had laboured ardently and assiduously with them, both individually and collectively considered, but all to no purpose. It was therefore some satisfaction to him, at least, that his absence had brought about that which his presence could not. This alone was sufficient to justify his resignation. What was an honest man to do who found himself situated as he was? He had avowed his principles, in that house, to his friends, to his constituents, and to the nation at large, with the existence of which as a great and respectable state he deemed them inseparable. Was it ever conceived or expected that he should continue in a responsible department of the state, and be answerable, in his place in that house, for measures that were foreign to his heart, and, in his opinion, hostile to the

best interests of the empire? He trusted, the public, and all who knew his habits of thinking and acting, had a better opinion both of his understanding and heart than to suppose him capable of such meanness. It was in fact a conduct to which he was not equal.

His honourable friend had professed himself totally indifferent who were the men, while the measures they pursued continued good. It was difficult to say whether this trite maxim in modern politics was most plausible or fallacious. Were men in private life deemed wise or foolish for depositing any thing dear or valuable to them in the hands of a stranger? Was it not one of the first rules with every man who knew the world, *I will never trust whom I do not know?* Is the obligation the less strong, the less sacred, the less commanding or consequential, that the public, and not a man's own petty concerns, is the object? Who but a madman would entrust whatever he regarded as most precious and inestimable with whoever might happen first to accept of them without farther solicitude or anxiety? Was it consistant

sistent with the least degree of penetration, sagacity, or political circumspection, to depend on the events of futurity, or the caprice of contingencies, for justifying a manifest and direct treachery to those principles which involved the most essential rights of humanity? The honourable general was certainly welcome for him in this, as in every other case, to judge for himself. He must excuse, however, his presuming in the present matter, to declare against his judging for him. He would not relinquish the dictates of his own mind, especially in affairs which he had so often and so carefully revolved and viewed on all sides within himself, to any with whose principles and virtues he was not absolutely satisfied, and in whom he had not the fullest and most unbounded confidence. This was not in his power as matters were at present circumstanced. The nobleman presiding at the treasury board was not of a description to command that faith and trust, that cordial unanimity and confidence, which, in such a predicament, was wanting, was expected, and was indespensable. This breach was on a public and national, not on a private and

personal ground. He withdrew, the moment the interest of his country required he should. This was the great unerring compass, by which he had ever steered, and ever would steer, his political course. He had no other pilot, and would have none; and whether he should sink or swim, live or die, he was the public's, and could never be ill disposed of in their service.

His mind might see things on a less broad and comprehensive scale than the honourable gentleman; but he was answerable only for his own feelings and convictions. These might incline him to be less credulous, and fill him with more jealousies than his honourable friend was liable to entertain. What seemed only niceties to the one, were, in the apprehension of the other, matters of the greatest magnitude and importance. Were the honourable gentleman promised without any possible condition on his part, some princely favour, as nothing less could merit his acceptance, his expectations of such an object might be reasonable in proportion to the confidence he reposed in the party promising. But, should he

afterwards

afterwards learn, that a certain equivalent was looked for before he could receive or realize it, the extreme generosity of his noble nature would, doubtless, prevent his perceiving the difference. But the same generosity, that made him so very superior to others in their conceptions of the self same object, ought to have furnished him with an apology in their behalf, when the timidity of their minds was alarmed by things which affected the magnanimity of his only as a few insignificant shades or niceties. He would not, however, either censure or defend the mental constitution which God had given him. It was enough for him, that his consience did not upbraid him with acting dishonourable or disingenuously. But, he would say, this must have been the case, had he not done what he did. He was impelled to resign by every consideration that could operate on the heart and feelings of an honest man. The honourable gentleman might, but he could not, regard, without emotion or concern, who took the lead in his majesty's councils. He deemed it a great and national measure; and consequently of infinite moment to

every individual, but much more so to a member of parliament, and still more so to one of his majesty's cabinet ministers.—Their honour, their duty, and every thing dear to them were at stake. What! had he and his friends laboured so long and assiduously to destroy a system, which it was now meanly, but abortively, attempted to make them accessary in reviving? Must they not see the trick, that is meant to be played upon them, without blame? Were they censurable for detecting an artifice with which the strength and glory of Great Britain was most intimately connected? Why are not the honourable gentleman and his worthy coadjutors satisfied with their own integrity, in keeping their places, without blaming those who relinquish them? Is not their eagerness for an *eclaircissement* a certain indication that all is not right with them, even in their own opinion? He and his friends had nothing to dread from the severest scrutiny. They had acted right, because they had acted from fidelity to their engagements with the public, whom they never had betrayed, and never would; whose cause and interest they preferred to every thing,

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and for which they now sacrificed whatever was most flattering or alluring to most minds.

Mr. Fox would not pay his majesty so poor a compliment as the honourable gentleman certainly did, by asserting, that lord Shelburne had convinced or persuaded him, that the independence of America was a measure which must now be adopted. It was from this house, it was from the people at large, it was from the royal observation on the daily occurrences of things, that such generous and princely ideas were indulged in the royal breast. He therefore deemed it, if not unfair, at least a poor compliment to that house, and to the public, to attribute that to the address of an individual, which certainly originated in the sentiments and resolutions so unanimously and boldly avowed by themselves. Though they were altogether out of the question, it was hardly treating his colleagues in office with due respect, to give lord Shelburne the sole merit of what surely belonged to them as much as to him. Indeed, if any individual had more merit than another, in a business so much and jointly the object

object of all, it was, no doubt, the honourable gentleman himself. What was the motion he brought into that house, and by which the late administration was certainly annihilated? If it had any meaning, it went to the full and unconditional independence of America. He would not think so disrespectfully of his royal master, whose service he had so lately resigned, as once to suppose he could have a different idea from his people, on a subject so dear to their hearts and so essential to their interests. He knew the justice, the discernment, the gentleness and the mercy, of the royal character, better than to suppose he could dissent, from the general opinion of the nation, on a point concerning which their sentiments had been delivered in so decided a manner. But why was not he, why was not the honourable gentleman himself, brought forward, as using all their influence to carry a point which seemed a favourite one with them all? Was it not that the noble lord in question was alone suspected of having less friendly ideas on this topic, than any one of his numerous colleagues in office.

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He did not wish to bear harder on the honourable gentleman, whom he had long regarded with sentiments of the highest respect. But now, that he had been somewhat involuntarily put on his own defence, it was natural, it was necessary, in his case, to state his conduct as he had stated it. A variety of circumstances was against him. It was none of the least, that he did not think himself at liberty to speak so freely and fully as he had accustomed himself to do on other occasions. Official minuteness would, in this case, be deemed both tedious and inexpedient. And yet, without such a very circumstantial detail, as he did not think it became him, at this time, to give, he was sensible his defence could not be so strong, so complete, or so generally effective, as it might otherwise have been.

The prorogation of parliament, which happened a few days afterwards, prevented, for a time, the subject of Mr. Fox's resignation being further discussed in that assembly; but on the next meeting of the house of commons on the 5th of December, when many of his motives for reserve

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no longer existed, Mr. Fox took occasion to enter into a minute explanation of the cause which produced his retirement from office. Some time before his resignation, Mr. Fox said, he had written to Mr. Grenville, the then British minister at Paris, authorizing him, by the king's command, to offer to the American agents, "to recognize the independence of the United States in the first instance, and not to reserve it as a condition of peace." At the same time an official letter, he declared, for the same purpose, was sent by the earl of Shelburne to sir Guy Carleton, the commander in chief in America. Mr. Fox had been suspicious of the sincerity of some of his colleagues, and that the measure he proposed had not their entire approbation, he had, therefore, in order to prevent any misconception, purposely chosen the most forcible expressions that the English language could supply; and when he found that the earl of Shelburne had used the very same expressions in his letter to sir Guy Carleton, he confessed his joy was so great, that he immediately carried it to the marquis of Rockingham, and told him that their distrust of

that

that noble lord's intention had been groundless, and were now done away. "Judge then," said he, "of my grief and astonishment, when, during the illness of my noble friend, another language was heard in the cabinet, and the noble earl and his friends began to consider the above letter as containing offers only of a conditional nature, to be recalled, if not accepted as the price of peace! Finding myself thus ensnared and betrayed, and all confidence destroyed, I quitted a situation in which I found I could not remain either with honour or safety."

We now come to a very remarkable era in the public life of this grate statesman, we mean the celebrated coalition between him and lord North. No political transaction ever excited more general astonishment, or was followed with a larger share of public disapprobation, than this union between the great leaders of the whig and tory parties. All that opposition, for a long series of years, had urged against "the incapacity, indolence, blunders, obstinacy, corruption, &c." of lord North, were now recalled to their recollection, and their junction with him stigmatized, both

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in and out of parliament, as a base and flagitious desertion of principle. No allowance was made for the warmth of debate, or for those sallies and intemperances of speech, into which the gravest members of a popular assembly may sometimes inadvertently fall; but whatever had been advanced against lord North, particularly by Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke, was now diligently collected into one focus, and made to magnify the incongruity and deformity of the coalition.

One of the happiest strokes in parliament against Mr. Fox's share in the coalition, occured after the earl of Shelburne had resigned, in consequence of the house of commons expressing its disapprobation of the preliminaries of peace, and some motions had been made praying "his majesty to take into his serious consideration the very distracted and unsettled state of the empire after a long and exhausting war; and that his majesty would therefore condescend to comply with the wishes of the house, by forming an administration entitled to the confidence of his people, and such as might have a tendency to put an end to the unfortunate divisions and distrac-

tions of the country." To this address a member proposed the following addition, the latter part taken verbatim from a motion made by Mr. Fox, in March 1782, "and that his majesty would be graciously pleased not to nominate or appoint any person or persons to fill up the vacant departments, *who by their mismanagement of public affairs, and want of foresight and abilities* when they were in office, *had lost the confidence of the people.*"

This attack was parried with great dexterity by Mr. Fox. If the honourable baronet [sir Richard Hill], he said, had carried his intended amendment, he should also have proposed to have added the following to it, "and that his majesty would also be graciously pleased not to employ, as ministers, any of those whom that house had declared *to have made a peace, in which the concessions to the enemies of Great Britain were greater than they were entitled to*."*

"If

* Taken from lord John Cavendish's Resolutions of Censure

"If the house," continued Mr. Fox, "adopted both these amendments, (and the latter stood at least as fair for their approbation as the former,) his majesty would indeed find no small difficulty where to chuse. It was, however, a matter of great pride and satisfaction to him to reflect, that the only set of men against whom no objection could be made, was the small party with whom he had the honour to be, in a more particular manner, connected. This very circumstance, he argued, was a sufficient and convincing proof how necessary it was for the safety of the country that parties should forget their ancient animosities, and join in cordial endeavours to rescue it out of a state which lead directly to anarchy and confusion.

With respect to the surprise which had been expressed at the coalition, he asked, whether it was any delinquency of character or desertion of principle to coalesce solely for the purpose of obtaining such an administration as the country

Censure on the Peace, carried against ministry, February 21, 1783, by a majority of 17.

might

might depend upon? Surely it was time for men of every description to throw aside all personal and public prejudices, when the welfare of the state demanded it of them, and it was obvious to every intelligent individual, that nothing but a cordial co-operation of parties could be the means of forming such a government, as should be found adequate to carry on the great business of the nation.—The coalition was said to be formed between persons who could never agree in any public opinion. This assertion, he contended, was unfounded. To argue, that it was impossible for men who had differed in opinion upon certain points, to act together cordially for the public good, was to argue against experience. The noble lord in the blue ribbon had undoubtedly held opinions contrary to his, but he did not despair, on that account, that their united exertions might, on national considerations, promote the public interest. If the violence with which their former opposition to each other had, perhaps, sometimes even indecently, been carried on, was the principal objection brought against their present union, surely they deserved the

more merit for consenting to forget those animosities, which long and violent contests must naturally have produced.

Mr. Fox then proceeded to shew that the difference in opinion between him and lord North was not greater than the disagreement between the political opinions of lord Thurlow and the duke of Richmond, and of other members of the cabinet; and he contended, that if such an union was considered as dishonourable, the disgrace would equally cover both parties; and to say the least, that a coalition* which included the most distinguished

* During the debates on Mr. Fox's celebrated India bill, the coalition was made a particular subject of attack by those members who having nothing in the shape of argument to urge against the bill, endeavoured to defeat that measure by rendering odious the characters of the proposer and the supporters of it. "Disgraceful, cursed coalition," became a sort of watchword with politicians of this class, and one member incurred no small share of ridicule by declaring that he wished to see a starling perched on the right elbow of the speaker's chair, which should be taught to repeat incessantly to the treasury bench, "disgraceful, cursed coalition."

distinguished persons of each party, could not be more disgraceful than a coalition formed of the shreds and remnants of both.

Lord

coalition." Mr. Fox (December 1, 1783,) in reply to the sarcasms of this gentleman and some others of more weight in the house, defended himself in the following terms.

"An honourable gentleman (Mr. Martin), to whom an abuse of the coalition seems a sort of luxury, wishes that a starling were at the right hand of the chair to cry out "disgraceful coalition!" Sir, upon this subject I shall offer but a few words.

"The calamitous situation of this country, at the close of the war, required an administration whose stability could give it a tone of firmness with foreign nations, and promise some hope of restoring the faded glories of the country. Such an administration could not be formed without some junction of parties; and, if former differences were to be an insurmountable barrier to union, no chance of salvation remained for the country, as it was well known, that four public men could not be found, who had not, at one time or other, taken opposite sides in politics. The great cause of difference between us and the noble lord in

Lord North, in vindication of himself, said, that his wishes in forming the coalition, had been to form

the blue ribband no longer existed; his personal character stood high; and thinking it safer to trust him than those who had before deceived us, we preferred to unite with the noble lord. A similar junction, in 1757, against which a similar clamour was raised, saved the empire from ruin, and raised it above the rivalship of all its enemies. The country, when we came into office, bore not a very auspicious complexion; yet I do not despair of seeing it once again resume its consequence in the scale of nations, and make as splendid a figure as ever. Those who have asserted the impossibility of our agreeing with the noble lord and his friends, were false prophets; and events have belied their augury. We have differed like men, and like men we have agreed.

"A body of the best and honestest men in this house, who serve their country without any other reward than the glory of the disinterested discharge of their public duty, approved of that junction, and sanctify that measure by their cordial support.

"Such, sir, is this coalition, which the state of the country rendered indispensable; and for which the history of

form a broad, permanent, and efficient administration, and by coalescing to forget former prejudices

of every country records a thousand precedents; yet to this the term *disgraceful* is applied. Is it not extraordinary, then, that gentlemen should be under such spells of delusion, as not to see, that if calling it disgraceful makes it so, these epithets operate with equal force against themselves. If the *coalition* be disgraceful, what is the *anti-coalition?* When I see a right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) surrounded by the early objects of his political, nay his hereditary * hatred, and hear him revile the coalition, I am lost in astonishment how men can be so blind to their own situation, as to attempt to wound us in this particular point, possessed as we are of the power of returning the same blow, with the vulnerable part staring us directly in the face. To the honourable gentleman, who wishes that a starling were perched upon the right hand of the chair, I must reply, that it would be quite as reasonable to have another starling on the left hand of the chair, to chirp up *coalition* against *coalition*, and so harmonize their mutual disgrace, if disgrace there be.

"With equal consistency, another honourable gentleman calls us *deserters—us!* A few cold and disaffected members

* Mr. Jenkinson sat near Mr. Pitt, Mr. Dundas, &c.

judices and animosities, and turn their thoughts to those essential advantages which the country might

fall off, then turn about, and, to palliate their own defection, call the body of the army *deserters*. *We* have not deserted; here we are a firm phalanx. Deserted indeed we have been in the moment of disaster, but never dejected, and seldom complaining. Some of those who rose upon our wreck, and who eagerly grasped that power which we had the labour of erecting, now call us deserters. We retort the term with just indignation. Yet whilst they presume we have the attributes of men, they would expect us to have the obduracy of savages. They would have our resentments insatiate, our rancour eternal. In our opinion, an oblivion of useless animosity is much more noble; and in that, the conduct of our accusers goes hand and hand with us. But I beg of the house, and I wish the world to observe, that although, like them, we have abandoned our enmities, we have not, like them, relinquished our friendships."

In another part of his speech, Mr. Fox, in reply to Mr. Powys, who had insinuated that he was actuated by avarice, or ambition, or party spirit, said, "I have failings in common with every human being, beside my own peculiar faults; but of avarice I have indeed held myself guiltless. My

might yet derive from unanimity and exertion. His great object was to put an end to that discord which

My abuse has been, for many years, even the profession of several people; it was their traffic, their livelihood; yet until this moment I knew not that avarice was in the catalogue of the sins imputed to me. Ambition, I confess, I have, but not ambition upon a narrow bottom, or built upon paltry principles. If, from the devotion of my life to political objects, if from the direction of my industry to the attainment of some knowledge of the constitution, and the true interests of the British empire, the ambition of taking no mean part in those acts that elevate nations, and make a people happy, be criminal, that ambition I acknowledge. And as to party spirit,—that I feel it, that I have been ever under its impulse, and that I ever shall, is what I proclaim to the world:—that I am one of a party, a party never known to sacrifice the interests, or barter the liberties of the nation for mercenary purposes, for personal emolument or honours; a party linked together upon principles which comprehend whatever is dear and most precious to free men, and essential to a free constitution, is my pride and my boast.

"The honourable gentleman has furnished me with another assertion, which it is also my pride to make: he

which had so long unhappily distracted the country, and to establish us once more in tranquillity at home, and respect abroad.

" Our

says I am connected with a number of the first families in the country. Yes, sir, I have a peculiar glory that a body of men renowned for their ancestry, important for their possessions, distinguished for their personal worth, with all that is valuable to men at stake, hereditary fortunes, and hereditary honours, deem me worthy of their confidence. With such men I am something—without them, nothing. My reliance is upon their good opinion; and in that respect, perhaps, I am fortunate. Although I have a just confidence in my own integrity, yet, as I am but a man, perhaps it is well that I have no choice but between my own eternal disgrace, and a faithful discharge of my public duty; whilst these kind of men are overseers of my conduct, whilst men whose uprightness of heart and spotless honour are even proverbial in the country (looking at lord John Cavendish) are the vigils of my deeds, it is a pledge to the public for the purity and rectitude of my conduct. The prosperity and honour of the country are blended with the prosperity and honour of these illustrious persons; they have so much at stake, that if the country falls, they fall with it; and to countenance any thing against

" Our connection," continued the noble lord, " was founded in principles of honour; when the great points on which we differed were no more, we thought we might act together with cordiality, and without inconsistency. We were not mistaken: we tried the experiment and it succeeded. No meanness, no dishonour, no jealousy discovered itself; all was inviolable adherence to honour and good faith on one part; all was confidence on the other. No mean concessions were made on either side; I can appeal to my right honourable friend, if I even sacrificed any one opinion which I formerly seriously held upon principle, unless where reason and argument might have pointed out the propriety of it: and in justice to my right honourable colleague, I must declare, that he never sacrificed to me any principle which he ever held when in opposition to my administration. The necessity of the times called for it; and experi-

its interests, would be a suicide upon themselves: The good opinion and protection of these men, then, is a security to the nation for my behaviour, because if I forfeit their regard, I lose my all."

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ence had justified it. When parliament put an end to my administration by the address against the American war, it was succeeded by another, which appeared to be strong; but it carried the seeds of weakness in its own bosom, in the disunion which appeared in several parts of it, and soon shewed itself by their splitting asunder, and the secession of a part of it from the cabinet. The next administration was but weak, because it was ill connected, and it had lost the support of those who formerly acted with it; the members of it therefore fell off one after another, till losing the confidence of the house, the poor remnant of it was obliged to yield to the voice of parliament, and retire. From this experience it appeared necessary for the good of the state, that a permanent government should be formed, and it was clear that it could not possibly be formed unless a coalition should take place among those, who, though once enemies upon points which no longer come into debate, might act together very cordially in every other respect. On such principles the coalition was formed. But when it is charged with having seized upon

government,

government, this is a charge I do not understand, for the public waited six weeks for a ministry, and every means were tried for a new one, without the assistance of the coalition; but failing in every attempt, the ministers all quitted the cabinet before the coalition were sent for. The cabinet was then empty, so that if we seized upon it, it was by marching in after the garrison which ought to have defended it had fled, and who as they were going out cried, "what a terrible cursed thing is this coalition, that is driving us from our situations." But, if we became possessed of government, we are at worst charged with having carried it by storm, bravely, in the face of the enemy, not by sap. We carried on our advances regularly and above ground, in view of the foe, not by mining in the dark and blowing up the fort before the garrison knew there was an intention to attack it."

But the most satisfactory defence of the measure was that made by Mr. Sheridan, at a subsequent period. He confessed, that when the idea of a coalition with lord North was first started, he had advised

advised his right honourable friend not to accept of it; and his reason was this :—his right honourable friend had great popularity, which he might lose by a coalition, respectable friends whom he might disgust; and prejudices of the strongest nature to combat. He made no doubt but similar objections occurred to the friends of the noble lord, and that they were urged to him, in order to dissuade him from coalescing with his right honourable friend. Mutual diffidence between men long accustomed to oppose one another might naturally be expected. The prejudices of the public also concurred to prevent this coalition. The middling class of people, for whom he had the highest respect, and to whom, sooner than to the great, the house of commons must look for support in every emergency, were not certainly the best qualified to judge of nice and refined points of politics: accustomed to judge of measures by men, he apprehended that they would give themselves no time to examine the principles, motives, and grounds of a coalition; but condemn it on its first appearance, merely because it was composed of men who had long been

been political enemies. On these grounds, full of apprehension for the character of his right honourable friend, he had most certainly given him his advice against a coalition. But when the necessities of the times at last pointed it out as the only means of salvation to this country; and when, from the opportunities he had had of seeing the noble lord and his friends, he was fully convinced of the honour, fairness, openness, and steadiness of their conduct; not only he did not condemn the coalition, but he rejoiced that it had taken place even in spite of his own advice. Diffidence soon gave way to the most perfect reliance on the honour of the noble lord, and on that of his friends, and their steady adherence to those principles which had been laid down as the basis of the coalition. It was unnecessary, therefore, after saying this, that he should tell the house his confidence in his right honourable friend had not felt the smallest diminution: fully acquainted with his character, he knew that he looked down with indifference, if not with contempt, on riches, places, and dignities, as things by no means necessary to his happiness: it was

his

his right honourable friend's ambition to deserve and preserve the esteem and confidence of his friends; and he was sure that he would sacrifice neither, for all that place and emolument could bestow upon him.

The coalition came into office on the 2d of April 1782. The principal members of the new administration were the duke of Portland, who was placed at the head of the treasury; lord North and Mr. Fox, secretaries of state; lord John Cavendish, chancellor of the exchequer; lord viscount Keppel, first commissioner of the admiralty; lord Stormont, president of the council; and the earl of Carlisle, lord privy seal. The great seal was put into commission, and lord Loughborough placed at the head of it. Mr. Burke resumed his office of paymaster general; Mr. Sheridan was appointed one of the secretaries of the treasury; colonel Fitzpatrick, secretary at war; and the other minor departments of the state were filled with nearly an equal proportion of the friends of each of the coalescing ministers.

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The most important subjects, which the new ministers brought before the consideration of parliament during the remainder of the session, were a bill for opening a commercial intercourse with America, a loan of twelve millions for the service of the year, and an establishment of fifty thousands per annum for the prince of Wales. The ministry were of opinion that his royal highness should have been allowed a larger income, and gave their advice accordingly at the council table, but on this point they were overruled by the authority of the sovereign himself. On the 16th of July the session was closed with a speech from the throne, the most prominent feature of which was, an intimation that the consideration of the affairs of the East Indies would require to be resumed as early as possible, and to be pursued with a serious and unremitting attention.

During the vacation, definitive treaties of peace were concluded with France, Spain, and America, in which the diplomatic skill of Mr. Fox obtained some advantages that had been neglected by the negotiators of the preliminary articles. These related

related to the British settlers on the island of Tobago, which was ceded to France by the preliminary treaty, without any stipulations in their favour;—the limits of the gum trade, a constant subject of dispute between the two powers, were accurately defined;—a reasonable basis of pacification was agreed on for India;—and all the benefits of former treaties revived and renewed.

On the meeting of parliament in November, no time was lost by Mr. Fox in bringing forward his celebrated plan for the better management of the affairs of the East India Company. It was admitted by all parties, that the state of the company's affairs, both at home and in India, was in the highest degree critical and dangerous; and that nothing but strong measures and an entire change of system could place them on a secure and honourable footing. But public opinion differed widely as to the means of accomplishing this salutary object; and Mr. Fox's plan, though it was supported with the most captivating and persuasive powers of eloquence, was rejected through the base influence of a court intrigue, and

and the illustrious author of it driven, not indeed with disgrace to himself, but with indelible disgrace to those who advised the measure, from the councils of his sovereign. As few public matters have been more misrepresented or more misunderstood than Mr. Fox's India bill, an impartial examination of it, together with a fair display of the principal arguments that were urged against it, will probably not be thought superfluous here.

Mr. Fox, in his introductory speech on the measure (November 18, 1783,) after taking an able review of the reports of the committees, that had sat on the investigation of Indian affairs, observed, that with regard to the existence of great defects in the present system of governing India, and the dangerous and deplorable extent of the mischiefs and abuses arising from those defects, the house was well acquainted. The great difficulty lay in chusing the mode of remedying the defects that had been so fully ascertained. On former occasions, doubts had been started on this question: to whom do the territorial acquisitions in India belong? Many, and

grave persons, were of opinion, that they belonged to the crown; and they argued, that it was absurd that a body of merchants should be supposed capable of managing and governing great territories, and entering into all the mazes and refinements of modern politics. He was aware also, that very weighty persons had, on the other hand, maintained, that the territories belonged of right to the company; and they retorted very justly, saying that it was equally absurd to suppose, that mere statesmen were qualified to enter into, and conduct the complicated branches of a remote and difficult trade. To this latter opinion he was himself inclined to lean. His idea, therefore, with regard to India, was to form a mixed system of government, adapted, as well as the nature of the case would admit, to the mixed complexion of our interests in India. He was willing, in the first instance, to leave the question of right to the territorial possession undecided. It was generally thought, that if government should even take the territorial possessions into their own hands, they would be under the necessity of keeping up a company to carry on a trade, by which alone the revenues

revenues of India could be converted to the benefit of great Britain.

His plan was to discontinue the present powers and authorities of the company, and to establish a board to consist of seven persons, who should be invested with full power to appoint and displace officers in India, and under whose controul the whole government of that country should be placed; and another board to consist of nine assistant directors, who should have charge of the sales, outfits, &c. of the company, and in general of all its commercial concerns, but still to be subject to the controul of the first seven. The board he would have held in England, under the immediate eye of parliament; and their proceedings should be entered in books for the inspection of both houses. For the present, he intended that parliament should name all the persons who should sit at this board; but then it should only be *pro hac vice*. He would have the board established for three or five years; or for such a length of time as should be thought sufficient to try the experiment, how far this new establish-

ment might be useful. When that should be known, if experience should have proved its utility, then he proposed, that, in future, the king should have the nomination of the first seven. If any of the assistant directors should die or resign, the vacancies should be filled up by the court of proprietors. In this plan the greatest powers might safely be entrusted with the board, because the members of it would be at home, and under the eye of that house, before whom their proceedings must be laid.

There were other points on which he had formed an intention to touch, and for which he must bring in a second bill, in aid and reinforcement of the first. An absurd opinion seemed to prevail in Hindostan, that all the lands belong absolutely to the emperor, and that therefore they may be disposed of at pleasure. Upon this principle it had been customary to turn the ancient zemindars, land owners, or gentry of the country, out of their possessions, if others could be found who would pay more for them. This was a destructive practice, built on an absurd and erroneous

erroneous opinion; it destroyed agriculture and improvements, and took away that stimulus to the acquisition of property, the consciousness that it would be permanent. His plan would be, to enact, that upon the payment of certain fixed rents or tributes, the landholders should enjoy the undisturbed possession of their lands, which no power should take from them; and in this he trusted he should be most powerfully seconded by the humanity and justice of parliament. He stated also as a very important object of his bill, and which stood much in need of correction, the practice of the company's servants receiving presents from the Indian princes, and others, the dependants on the company. This was, he said, the grand original, the *primum mobile*, of all the rapacity, disobedience, injustice, and cruelty, that had disgraced the British government in India. In vain had the court of directors sent over injunction after injunction, to forbid the company's servants from taking any present, on any pretence, from the Indian princes and zemindars. In vain had an express act of parliament passed to forbid the practice. The orders of the court

of directors, and the acts of the British legislature, were held in equal, and the most supreme contempt in Bengal. A stronger proof of this could not be adduced than the conduct of Mr. Hastings, who had accepted various presents, and among others, a present of one hundred thousand pounds from a raja, who, at the very time, stood deeply indebted to the company, and who pleaded the most abject distress in excuse for not paying the company what he owed them. This hundred thousand pounds, it was true, Mr. Hastings had afterwards brought to the account of the company; but it was a considerable time first, and in the interim he had lent it to them upon bond, and charged a high interest. Mr. Fox laid great stress upon the narrative, and urged it as a glaring proof of his former opinion, that the servants of the company in India were thought by the natives to possess more power than their masters; and that it was evident they held the orders of the court of directors, and even the acts of the British parliament, in sovereign contempt.

Another

Another point to which he designed to direct the correction his bill was intended to administer, was, to the abolition of all monopolies. These were extremely unfair in the first instance, extremely pernicious, and tended to consume the vitals of commerce, rather than to feed or cherish, or to lend it vigour. He mentioned the monopoly for opium, which had been given to the son of a chairman (Mr. Sullivan) of the East India Company, who sold the contract for a considerable premium the very same day; and in consequence of which the trade for opium was absolutely lost to the company. It had been suggested, that it would be adviseable to give the Gentoos the laws of England; but such an attempt, he thought, would be ridiculous and chimerical, the customs and religion of India clashed too much with them. But, though British laws could not be established among them, still their spirit and efficacy might, and this great principle might be carried into effect, that no man should be deprived of his lands, while he fulfilled the conditions under which he held them.

He was aware that the task he had set himself was extremely arduous and difficult; he knew that it had considerable risk in it; but when he took upon himself an office of responsibility, he had made up his mind to the situation and the danger of it. He had left all thoughts of ease, indolence and safety behind him. It was not a time for indolence and regard to safety in a minister. The situation of the country called for vigorous exertion, for new measures, and for some risks. He knew that a minister who had no other consideration but his own safety, might be quiet and safe, but the consequence must be that the country would be ruined. How much better was it to venture what the exigency of affairs required; the minister, it was true, might be ruined, but his country would be saved.

Such were the outlines of Mr. Fox's bill, and the arguments by which he supported it. The opponents of the measure admitted the necessity of a radical reform in the government of India; but, they contended, that the plan of reform which Mr. Fox meant to introduce was not a constitutional

constitutional reform such as they could approve of, but a tyrannical overthrow of the most sacred principles of British jurisprudence, which they were therefore bound most strenuously to oppose. It was an attack, they said, on the most solemn charters, ratified by the faith of parliament; and was fraught with the most pointed mischief against the integrity of the British legislature. They regarded it, or they affected to regard it, as the fatal forerunner of some dreadful political change which was to destroy the balance of the constitution. The king, they said, did not hold his crown on a more solemn tenure, than the East India Company did their commercial and territorial rights*; and they invidiously asked, if the company's

* "The charter, conveying the rights of the company, was conceived in the clearest and strongest terms that could be imagined; it was clearer, stronger, and better guarded in point of expression, than the act of settlement itself, which by God's blessing, had established the present royal family on the throne of England." Mr. W. (lord) Grenville's speech, November 20, 1783. "The right, by which our gracious sovereign holds the sceptre, is not more indisputably

company's charter was to be taken away, what security was there, that the charter of the bank of England, or of any other body corporate in the kingdom, might not equally be violated? What security could any individual have for his private property, if the rights and property of the company were thus to be torn from them? It was a stretch of authority to which they never could consent. If the bill passed, it would be a death warrant to all the charters, and immunities of corporations, and of individuals in Britain. These were the chief arguments, certainly not unanswerable ones, which were brought forward against the proposed (admitted on all hands unavoidable), violation of the company's charter. They were strongly urged by all the opponents of Mr. Fox's scheme in parliament, and taken up with extraordinary warmth and alarm by the city of London, the bank of England, and other public bodies.

putably confirmed, than that by which the East India Company holds those deeds, and those territorial and commercial emoluments which the hand of oppression is now about to wrest from them." Mr. Pitt's speech on the same day.

The

The next objection to the bill was, that it tended to increase the influence of the crown. On this point, however, there was a considerable difference of opinion among the opposers of the measure, some of them contending that it went to increase the influence of the crown, while others, with some plausibility, maintained, that it diminished the influence of the crown, in order to promote the interests of the ministers and their party. The latter opinion was the more generally prevalent, and seemed to have the most probable foundation, as the commissioners, to whom the unlimited powers given by the bill were to be entrusted, were, in the first instance, to be appointed by parliament, and to hold their places for a term of four years independent of the pleasure of the crown. At the head of them was a nobleman (earl Fitzwilliam) of the purest principles and most exalted character; and the other members of the board were persons of acknowledged talents and unblemished reputation; but it did not escape observation, that they were the particular friends of ministry; and it was argued, that if the administration should be dismissed,

missed, as the board would still continue, its influence might be dangerously exerted to thwart the measures of government. Mr. Fox, it was alledged, tired of the long and unprofitable opposition in which the greater part of his public life had hitherto been passed, was determined to guard against contingencies for the future, and to fix himself so firmly in power, by Indian influence and patronage, that neither the displeasure of the sovereign, nor the wishes of the people, should avail to remove him from office. The coalition, it was affirmed, had ruined his popularity; and, having wrested the government of England out of the king's hands, he was resolved to seize on India, in order to secure the continuance of his authority.

These objections against the bill, which divide themselves into two heads, *violation of charter, and increase of influence,* were ably refuted by Mr. Fox, on the second reading of the bill. Having been accused of deserting his principles, he said, " If the history of my life were to be searched, this would be found the period in which I have

I have struggled most for the cause of liberty. Freedom, according to my conception of it, consists in the safe and sacred possession of a man's property, governed by laws defined and certain; with many personal privileges, natural, civil, and religious, which he cannot surrender without ruin to himself; and of which to be deprived by another power, is despotism. This bill, instead of subverting, is destined to stabilitate these principles; instead of narrowing the basis of freedom, it tends to enlarge it; instead of suppressing, its object is to infuse and circulate the spirit of liberty.

"What is the most odious species of tyranny? Precisely that which this bill is meant to annihilate. That a handful of men, free themselves, should execute the most base and abominable despotism over millions of their fellow creatures; that innocence should be the victim of oppression; that industry should toil for rapine; that the harmless labourer should sweat, not for his own benefit, but for the luxury and rapacity of tyrannic depredation. In a word, that thirty millions

lions of men, gifted by Providence with the ordinary endowments of humanity, should groan under a system of despotism, unmatched in all the histories of the world.

What is the end of all government? Certainly the happiness of the governed! Others may hold other opinions; but this is mine, and I proclaim it. What are we to think of a government, whose good fortune is supposed to spring from the calamities of its subjects, whose aggrandisement grows out of the miseries of mankind? This is the kind of government exercised under the East India Company upon the natives of Hindostan; and the subversion of that infamous government is the main object of the bill in question. But in the progress of accomplishing this end, it is objected that the charter of the company should not be violated: upon this point, sir, I shall deliver my opinion without disguise. A charter is a trust to one or more persons for some given benefit. If this trust be abused, if the benefit be not obtained, and that its failure arises from palpable guilt, or (what in this case is

is full as bad) from palpable ignorance or mismanagement, will any man gravely say, that trust should not be resumed, and delivered to other hands, more especially in the case of the East India Company, whose manner of executing this trust, whose laxity and languor produced, and tend to produce, consequences diametrically opposite to the ends of confiding that trust, and of the institution for which it was granted?—I beg gentlemen to be aware of the lengths to which their arguments upon the intangibility of this charter may be carried. Every syllable virtually impeaches the establishment by which we sit in this house, in the enjoyment of this freedom, and of every other blessing of our government. These kind of arguments are batteries against the main pillar of the British constitution. Some men are consistent with their own private opinions, and discover the inheritance of family maxims, when they question the principles of the revolution; but I have no scruple in subscribing to the articles of that creed which produced it. Sovereigns are sacred, and reverence is due to every king; yet, with all my attachments to the person

person of a first magistrate, had I lived in the reign of James the second, I should most certainly have contributed my efforts, and borne part in those illustrious struggles, which vindicated an empire from hereditary servitude, and recorded this valuable doctrine, that *trust abused was revocable.* No man will tell me, that a trust to a company of merchants stands upon the solemn and sanctified ground by which a trust is committed to a monarch; and I am at a loss to reconcile the conduct of men who approve that resumption of violated trust, which rescued and re-established our unparalleled and admirable constitution, with a thousand valuable improvements and advantages at the revolution, and who, at this moment, rise up the champions of the East India Company's charter, although the incapacity and incompetence of that Company to a due and adequate discharge of the trust reposed in them by that charter, are themes of ridicule and contempt to all the world; and although, in consequence of their mismanagement, connivance, and imbecility, combined with the wickedness of their servants, the very name of an Englishman

man is detested, even to a proverb, through all Asia, and the national character is become degraded and dishonoured. To rescue that name from odium, and to redeem this character from disgrace, are some of the objects of the present bill; and gentlemen should indeed gravely weigh their opposition to a measure, which, with a thousand other points not less valuable, aims at the attainment of these objests.

" Those who condemn the present bill as a violation of the chartered rights of the East India Company, condemn, on the same ground, I say again, the revolution as a violation of the chartered rights of King James II. He, with as much reason, might have claimed the property of dominion; but what was the language of the people? 'No, you have no property in dominion; dominion was vested in you, as it is in every chief magistrate, for the benefit of the community to be governed; it was a sacred trust delegated by compact; you have abused the trust; you have exercised dominion for the purposes of vexation and tyranny—not of comfort, protection, and good

order; and we therefore resume the power which was originally ours; we recur to the first principles of all government, the will of the many; and it is our will that you shall no longer abuse your dominion.' The case is the same with the East India Company's government over a territory of 280,000 square miles in extent, nearly equal to all Christian Europe, and containing 30,000,000 of the human race. It matters not whether dominion arise from conquest, or from compact. Conquest gives no right to the conqueror to be a tyrant; and it is no violation of right to abolish the authority which is misused*."

With

* The objections against the violation of the company's charter were ably refuted on the same day by Mr. Burke, the vigorous powers of whose mind had been turned for a series of years to the investigation of Indian affairs, and who was perhaps better acquainted with the politics of the East, in all their details, than any man in the house. "The phrase of *the chartered rights of men*," said this eloquent speaker, "which has been used as an objection to this bill, is full of affection; and very unusual

With regard to the increase of influence which the bill would confer, Mr. Fox argued the point with

usual in the discussion of privileges conferred by charters of the present description. But it is not difficult to discover what end that ambiguous mode of expression, so often reiterated, is meant to answer.

"The rights of men, that is to say, the natural rights of mankind, are indeed sacred things; and if any public measure is proved mischievously to affect them, the objection ought to be fatal to that measure, even if no charter at all could be set up against it. If these natural rights are farther affirmed and declared by express covenants; if they are clearly defined and secured against chicane, against power and authority by written instruments and positive engagements, they are in a still better condition: they partake not only of the sanctity of the object so secured, but of that solemn public faith itself, which secures an object of such importance. Indeed this formal recognition, by the sovereign power, of an original right in the subject, can never be subverted, but by rooting up the holding radical principles of government, and even of society itself. The charters, which we call by distinction *great*, are public instruments of this nature; I mean the charters of King John and King Henry the third. The

with his usual acuteness. " Much of my life," said he, " has been employed to diminish the inordinate

things secured by these instruments may, without any deceitful ambiguity, be very fitly called the *chartered rights of men.*

" These charters have made the very name of a charter dear to the heart of every Englishman. But, sir, there may be, and there are, charters, not only different in nature, but formed on principles the *very reverse* of those of the great charter. Of this kind is the charter of the East India Company. *Magna Charta* is a charter to restrain power, and to destroy monopoly. The East India charter is a charter to establish monopoly, and to create power. Political power and commercial monopoly are not the rights of men; and the rights derived to them from charters, it is fallacious and sophistical to call the chartered rights of men. These chartered rights (to speak of such charters, and of their effects, in terms of the greatest possible moderation) do at least suspend the natural rights of mankind at large; and in their very frame and constitution are liable to fall into a direct violation of them.

" It is a charter of this latter description (that is to say a charter of power and monopoly) which is affected by the

ordinate influence of the crown. In common, with others, I succeeded, and I glory in it. To support

the bill before you. This bill, sir, does, without question, affect it; it does affect it essentially and substantially. But having stated to you of what description the chartered rights are, which this bill touches, I feel no difficulty at all in acknowledging those chartered rights in their fullest extent. They belong to the company in the surest manner; and they are secured to that body by every sort of public sanction. They are stamped by the faith of the king; they are stamped by the faith of parliament; they have been bought for money—for money honestly and fairly paid; they have been bought for valuable consideration over and over again.

"I therefore freely admit to the East India Company their claim to exclude their fellow subjects from the commerce of half the globe. I admit their claim to administer an annual territorial revenue of seven millions sterling; to command an army of sixty thousand men; and to dispose (under the control of a sovereign, imperial discretion, and with the due observance of the natural and local law) of the lives and fortunes of thirty millions of their fellow creatures. All this they possess by charter, and by acts of parliament (in my opinion), without a shadow of controversy.

support that kind of influence which I formerly subverted, is a deed of which I shall never deserve

"Those who carry the rights and claims of the company the farthest, do not contend for more than this; and all this I freely grant. But, granting all this, they must grant to me, in my turn, that all political power which is set over men, and that all privilege claimed or exercised in exclusion of them, being wholly artificial, and, for so much, a derogation from the natural equality of mankind at large, ought to be some way or other exercised ultimately for their benefit.

"If this is true with regard to every species of political dominion, and every description of commercial privilege, none of which can be original, self-derived rights, or grants for the mere private benefit of the holders, then such rights or privileges, or whatever else you chuse to call them, are all in the strictest sense a *trust;* and it is of the very essence of every trust to be rendered *accountable;* and even totally to *cease*, when it substantially varies from the purpose for which alone it could have a lawful existence.

"This I conceive, sir, to be true, of the fruits of power vested in the highest hands, and of such as seem to hold of no human creature. But about the application of this

 principle

serve to be accused. The affirmation with which I first introduced this plan, I now repeat; I re-assert,

principle to subordinate, *derivative* trusts, I do not see how a controversy can be maintained. To whom then would I make the East India Company accountable? To parliament, assuredly, from whom their trust was derived; to parliament, which alone is capable of comprehending the magnitude of its objects, and its abuse; and alone capable of an effectual legislative remedy. The very charter, which is held out exclude parliament from correcting malversations with regard to the high trust vested in the company, is the very thing which at once gives a title, and imposes a duty on us to interfere with effect, whenever power and authority, originating from ourselves, are perverted from their purposes, and become instruments of wrong and violence.

"If parliament, sir, had nothing to do with this charter, we might have some sort of epicurean excuse to stand aloof, indifferent spectators of what passes in the company's name in India and in London. But if we are the very cause of the evil, we are in a special manner engaged to the redress; and for us passively to bear with oppressions committed under the sanction of our own authority, is, in truth and reason, for this house to be an active accomplice in the abuse.

assert that this bill as little augments the influence of the crown, as any measure which can be devised

" That the power notoriously, grossly abused, has been bought from us, is very certain. But this circumstance, which is urged against the bill, becomes an additional motive for our interference, lest we should be thought to have sold the blood of millions of men, for the base consideration of money. We sold, I admit, all that we had to sell; that is, our authority, not our controul. We had not a right to make a market of our duties.

" I ground myself, therefore, upon this principle—that if the abuse is proved, the contract is broken, and we re-enter into all our rights; that is, into the exercise of our duties. Our own authority is indeed as much a trust originally, as the company's authority is a trust derivatively; and it is the use we make of the resumed power that must justify or condemn us in the resumption of it. When we have perfected the plan laid before us by the right honourable mover, the world will then see what it is we destroy, and what it is we create. By that test we stand or fall; and by that test I trust it will be found in the issue, that we are going to supersede a charter abused to the full extent of all the powers which it could abuse, and exercised in the plenitude of despotism, tyranny, and corruption;

devised for the government of India, that presents the slightest promise of solid success, and that it tends to increase it in a far less degree than the bill proposed by the learned gentleman (Mr. Dundas). The very genius of influence consists in hope or fear; fear of losing what we have, or hope of gaining more. Make these commissioners removeable

corruption; and that in one and the same plan, we provide a real chartered security for the *rights of men*, cruelly violated under that charter.

"This bill, and those connected with it, are intended to form the *Magna Charta* of Hindostan. Whatever the treaty of Westphalia is to the liberty of the princes and free cities of the Germanic empire, and to the three religions there professed,——whatever the great charter, the statute of tallage, the petition of rights, and the declaration of rights, are to Great Britain, these bills are to the people of India. Of this benefit, I am certain, their condition is capable; and when I know that they are capable of more, my vote shall most assuredly be for our giving to the full extent of their capacity of receiving; and no charter of dominion shall stand as a bar in my way to their charter of safety and protection." Mr. Burke's Works, edit. 4to. p. 330 et seq.

removeable at will, and you set all the little passions of human nature afloat. If benefits can be derived from the bill, you had better burn it than make the duration of the bill short of the time necessary to accomplish the plans it is destined for. That consideration pointed out the expediency of a fixed period; and in this respect it accords with the principle of the learned gentleman's bill, with this superior advantage, that instead of leaving the commissioners liable to all the influence which springs from the appointment of a governor general removeable at *pleasure*, this bill invests them with the power *for the time specified* upon the same tenure that British judges hold their station, removeable upon delinquency, punishable upon guilt, but fearless of power if they discharge their trust, liable to no seducement, and with full time and authority to execute their functions for the common good of the country, and their own glory.

"The state of accusations against me upon this subject of *influence*, is truly curious. The learned gentleman (Mr. Dundas), in strains of emphasis

emphasis, declares, that this bill diminishes the influence of the crown beyond all former attempts, and calls upon those who formerly voted with him in support of that influence against our attempts to reduce it, and who now sit near me, to join him now in opposing my attempts to diminish that darling influence. He tells them, I *out Herod Herod;* and that I am out doing all my former out doings; and proclaims me as the merciless and insatiate enemy of the influence of the crown.

"Down sits the learned gentleman, and up starts an honourable gentleman, with a charge against me, of a nature the direct reverse. I have fought under your banner, cries the honourable gentleman (Mr. Martin), against that fell giant, the influence of the crown; I have bled in that battle which you commanded, and have a claim upon the rights of soldiership. You have conquered through us; and now that victory is in your arms, you turn traitor to our cause, and carry over your powers to the enemy. The fiercest of your former combatants in the cause

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of influence, falls far short of you at this moment; your attempts in re-erecting this monster, exceed all the exertions of your former foes. This night you will make the influence of the crown a colossus, that shall bestride the land, and crush every impediment. I impeach you for treachery to your ancient principles—come, come, and divide with us!

"This honourable gentleman, after a thrust or two at the coalition, sits down; and whilst the house is perplexing itself to reconcile these wide differences, the right honourable gentleman over the way (Mr. Pitt) confounds all past contradictions, by combining, in his own person, these extravagant extremes. He acknowledges that he has digested a paradox, and a paradox well he might call it, for never did a grosser one puzzle the intellects of a public assembly. By a miraculous kind of discernment he has found out, that the bill both *increases and diminishes* the influence of the crown.

"The bill diminishes the influence of the crown,

crown, says one; you are wrong, says a second, it increases it: you are both right says a third, for it both increases and diminishes the influence of the crown. Now as most members have one or other of these opinions upon the subject, the honourable gentleman can safely join with all parties upon this point; but few, I trust, will be found to join him.

"Thus, sir, is this bill combated, and thus am I accused. The nature and substance of these objections I construe as the strongest comment on the excellence of the bill. If a more rational opposition *could* be made to it, no doubt it would. The truth is, it increases the influence of the crown, and the influence of party as little as possible; and if the reform of India, or any other matter, is to be postponed until a scheme be devised, against which ingenuity, ignorance, or caprice, shall not raise objections, the affairs of human life must stand still."

Mr. Fox, after recapitulating the heads of his bill, and placing in the strongest light the improbability that powers conferred by it should be

be abused in the hands of such men as earl Fitzwilliam, concluded with replying in a most pointed manner to Mr. Pitt, who had declared, that "he would stake his character upon the danger of the bill." "I meet the right honourable gentleman in his own phrase," said Mr. Fox, "and oppose him, character to character; I risk my all upon the excellence of this bill; I risk upon it whatever is most dear to me, whatever men value most, the character of integrity, of talents, of honour, of present reputation, and future fame; these, and whatever else is precious to me, I stake upon the constitutional safety, the enlarged policy, the equity, and the wisdom of this measure, and have no fear in saying (whatever may be the fate of its authors) that this bill will produce to this country every blessing of commerce and revenue; and that by extending a generous and humane government over those millions whom the inscrutable destinations of Providence have placed under us in the remotest regions of the earth, it will consecrate the name of England amongst the noblest of nations."

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In the course of this day's debate, Mr. Burke, who was then united to Mr. Fox by the strongest ties of friendship, concluded a speech of nearly three hours continuance, from which we have already made some extracts, with the following warm and eloquent panegyric on the character of his illustrious friend.—" Having done my duty to the bill," said the orator, " let me now say a word of the author. I should leave him to his own noble sentiments, if the unworthy and illiberal language with which he has been treated, beyond all examples of parliamentary liberty, did not make a few words necessary, not so much in justice to him, as to my own feelings. I must say, then, that it will be a distinction honourable to the age, that the rescue of the greatest number of the human race that were ever so grievously oppressed, from the greatest tyranny that was ever exercised, has fallen to the lot of abilities and dispositions equal to the task ;—that it has fallen to one who has the enlargement to comprehend, the spirit to undertake, and the eloquence to support, so great a measure of hazardous benevolence. His spirit is not owing to his igno-

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rance of the state of men and things: he well knows what snares are spread about his path, from personal animosity, from court intrigue, and possibly from popular delusion: but he has put to hazard his ease, his security, his interest, his power, even his darling popularity, for the benefit of a people whom he has never seen. This is the road that all heroes have trod before him. He is traduced and abused for his supposed motives. He will remember, that obloquy is a necessary ingredient in the composition of all true glory: he will remember, that it was not only in the Roman customs, but it is in the nature and constitution of things, that calumny and abuse are essential parts of triumph. These thoughts will support a mind, which only exists for honour, under the burthen of temporary reproach. He is doing indeed a great good; such as rarely falls to the lot, and almost as rarely coincides with the desires, of any man. Let him use his time. Let him give the whole length of the reins to his benevolence. He is now on a great eminence where the eyes of mankind are turned to him. He may live long, he may do much. But here

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is the summit. He can never exceed what he does this day.

"He has faults; but they are faults that, though they may in a small degree tarnish the lustre, and sometimes impede the march of his abilities, have nothing in them to extinguish the fire of great virtues. *In those faults there is no mixture of deceit, of hypocrisy, of pride, of ferocity, of complexional despotism, or want of feeling for the distresses of mankind.* His are faults which might exist in a descendant of Henry IV. of France, as they did exist in that father of his country. Henry IV. wished that he might live to see a fowl in the pot of every peasant of his kingdom. That sentiment of homely benevolence was worth all the splendid sayings that are recorded of kings. But he wished, perhaps, far more than could be obtained, and the goodness of the man exceeded the power of the king. But this gentleman, a subject, may this day say at least, with truth, *that he secures the rice in his pot to every man in India.* A poet of antiquity thought it one of the first distinctions to a prince

whom he meant to celebrate, that, through a long succession of generations, he had been the progenitor of an able and virtuous citizen, who, by force of the arts of peace, had corrected governments of oppression, and suppressed wars of rapine.

" Indole proh! quanta juvenis, quantum daturus
" Ausoniæ populis ventura in sæcula civem!
" Ille super Gangem, super exauditus et Indos,
" Implebit terras voce; et furialia bella
" Fulmine compescet linguæ.

" This was what was said of the predecessor of the only person to whose eloquence it does not wrong that of the mover of this bill to be compared. But the Ganges and the Indus are the patrimony of the fame of my honourable friend, and not of Cicero. I confess, I anticipate with joy the reward of those, whose whole consequence, power, and authority, exist only for the benefit of mankind; and I carry my mind to all the people, and all the names and descriptions, that, relieved by this bill, will bless the labours of this parliament, and the confidence which the best

best house of commons has given to him who the best deserves it. The little cavils of party will not be heard where freedom and happiness will be felt. There is not a tongue, a nation, or religion in India, which will not bless the presiding care, and manly beneficence of this house, and of him who proposes to you this great work. Your names will never be separated before the throne of Divine Goodness, in whatever language, or with whatever rites, pardon is asked for sin, and reward for those who imitate the Godhead in his universal bounty to his creatures. These honours you deserve, and they will surely be paid, when all the jargon of influence, and party, and patronage, are swept into oblivion." "I have spoken what I think, and what I feel, of the mover of this bill. An honourable friend of mine, speaking of his merits, was charged with having made a studied panegyric. I don't know what his was. Mine, I am sure, is a studied panegyric; the fruit of much meditation; the result of the observation of near twenty years. For my own part, I am happy that I have lived to see this day: I feel myself overpaid for the labours of

eighteen years, when at this period, I am able to take my share, by one humble vote, in the destroying a tyranny that exists to the disgrace of this nation, and the destruction of so large a part of the human species."

On a division of the house, at half past four in the morning, the numbers in favour of the bill amounted to 217—against it 103. On a third reading, on the 8th of December, the bill was carried by a majority of 208 to 102, and ordered to be sent to the house of lords. In the upper house it was warmly opposed, at the first reading, by the duke of Richmond and lord Thurlow, who had been members of the former administration, but more particularly by earl Temple, who declared, "that he was happy to embrace the first opportunity of entering his protest against so infamous a bill; against a stretch of power so truly alarming, and that went near to seize upon the most inestimable part of our constitution—*our chartered rights.*" The bill, however, was ordered for a second reading on the 15th of December, without any division.

The

The arguments brought forward by the lords against the bill did not differ materially from those urged in the commons.

In the mean time the interior cabinet, which had hitherto lent at least its seeming approbation to the bill, by some intrigue which probably will never be fully illucidated, became violently prejudiced against it; and earl Temple through whose instrumentality the intrigue was carried on, received, by a written authority, the king's permission to declare, "That his majesty should deem those who should vote for the bill not only not his friends, but his enemies; and if these words were not strong enough, earl Temple might use whatever words he might deem stronger or more to the purpose." This emphatical expression of the royal disapprobation was communicated without loss of time to that part of the peerage, the numerous *noble* servants of the royal household or personages, whose hopes or fears rendered them peculiarly under the influence of the crown, and the effect of it was soon discerned, for on the second reading of the bill, which happened on

the 15th of December, several lords of the above description, who had entrusted their proxies to the duke of Portland and his friends, withdrew them only a few hours before the house met, and others, whose support ministers had every reason to expect, voted, through the interposition of this unconstitutional influence, on the side of opposition. A motion was made on that day for an adjournment, for the purpose of the further hearing of counsel against the bill, which was carried against the ministers by a majority of 87 against 79 votes. On the 17th of December it was moved, " That the bill be rejected," and this was carried by a still larger majority of 95 votes against the bill, to 76 who supported it.

The loss of this favourite measure proved fatal to the coalition ministry. At twelve o'clock on the following night, a royal message was sent to lord North and Mr. Fox, ordering, " That they should deliver up the seals of their offices, and send them by the under secretaries, Mr. Frazer, and Mr. Nepean, as a personal interview on the occasion would be disagreeable to the king:"

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and, early the next morning, letters of dismission, signed Temple, were sent, by his majesty's command, to the other members of the cabinet. At the same time a new administration was formed. Mr. Pitt was appointed first lord of the treasury and chancellor of the exchequer, and from that time might be considered as the efficient prime minister. Earl Gower was declared president of the council, and, on the resignation of earl Temple, who held the seals of secretary of state only three days, lord Sydney was appointed secretary for the home, and the marquis of Carmarthen for the foreign, department. Lord Thurlow was reinstated in the chancellorship; the duke of Rutland had the privy seal; lord Howe was placed at the head of the admiralty; and the duke of Richmond of the ordnance. In the inferior departments of the state an entire change likewise took place; the friends of the coalition were universally dismissed from their offices, and their places supplied by the retainers of the court, or the creatures of the new ministry.

Before, however, the dismissal of ministers took

place, the unprecedented interference of the crown to influence the deliberations of the upper branch of the legislature, was reprobated in the strongest terms in the house of commons, and a resolution was passed by a large majority, on the motion of Mr. Baker, member for Hertford, "That the house felt it necessary to declare, that to report any opinion, or pretended opinion of his majesty, upon any bill or other proceeding depending in either house of parliament, with a view to influence the votes of the members, was a high crime and misdemeanor, derogatory to the honour of the crown; a breach of the fundamental privileges of parliament, and subversive of the constitution of this country." This motion was made on the 17th of December, the day before the obnoxious ministry was dismissed, and the same day on which the India bill was lost in the house of lords. In the course of the debates which it occasioned, Mr. Fox ably and spiritedly defended the wisdom and propriety of that measure. No bill, he said, was ever more violently and systematically opposed, investigated at greater length, or with more ability: none had ever passed

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that house under the sanction of a more respectable and independent majority. How then did it succeed in the other house? What was the reception, which, thus circumstanced, it received from their lordships? Some degree of decency might have been expected from one branch of the legislature to another. That respectable independence which ought to be the leading feature in their decisions, is not incompatible with, but essential to such a mutual deference for the procedure of each, as must be the consequence of acting constitutionally. But how was this bill likely to be lost in the house of lords? Was it likely to be rejected by the voice of an independent majority? Could any man view the lords of the bed-chamber in that respectable light? Yet the whole fortune of the measure depended upon their determination. It was doubtless to be expected, that men in high office and of elevated rank, should prove themselves possessed of high and elevated sentiments; should join, to an exquisite sense of personal honour, the most perfect probity of heart; and should discover such strength and dignity of understanding, as might

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be expected from a superior education, the distinctions of fortune, and the example of the great and wise. But how did this description agree with the manner in which these peers had managed their proxies. Before the rumour of the king's displeasure reached their ears, they had cheerfully given their proxies to ministers; but the moment they receive intimation of it, in the same day, and in a few hours, matters appear to them in quite a different light, and the opinion which they embrace in the morning is renounced by noon.

"I am as ready as any man to allow," said Mr. Fox, "what is barely probable, that these lords might receive new convictions, which, like a miracle, operated effectually and at once; and that, notwithstanding their proxies, from such a sudden and extraordinary circumstance, without hearing any evidence or debate on the subject, they might feel an immediate and unaccountable impulse to make their personal appearance, and vote according to their consciences. Who would chuse to say that all this may not actually have been

been the case? There is certainly, however, a very uncommon coincidence in their lordships' peculiar situation, and this unexpected revolution of sentiment; and, were I disposed to treat the matter seriously, the whole compass of language affords no terms sufficiently strong and pointed to mark the contempt which I feel for their conduct! It is an impudent avowal of political profligacy! as if that species of treachery were less infamous than any other. It is not only a degradation of a station which ought to be occupied only by the highest and most exemplary honour, but forfeits their claim to the character of gentlemen, and reduces them to a level with the meanest and basest of the species: it insults the noble, the ancient, and the characteristic independence of the English peerage, and is calculated to traduce and vilify the British legislature in the eyes of all Europe, and to the latest posterity. By what magic nobility can thus charm vice into virtue, I know not, nor wish to know; but in any other thing than politics, and among any other men than lords of the bed-chamber, such an instance of the grossest perfidy would, as it well deserves,

deserves, be branded with infamy and execration.

" Can any thing, then, be more plain and obvious, than that this great, this important, this urgent measure, is become the handle of a desperate faction, whose principal object is power and place? It is the victim not of open and fair reasoning, but of that influence which shuns the light and shrinks from discussion; for those, who pledged their honour in its support, from an acknowledged conviction of its rectitude, propriety, and utility, have broken that faith, and relinquished their own judgments, in consequence of a rumour that such a conduct would be personally resented by the sovereign. What bill, in the history of parliament, or this country, was ever so traduced, so foully misrepresented, and betrayed in its passage through the different branches of the legislature; the stroke which must decide the contest, cannot come from its real enemies, but its false friends; and its fate, without example in the annals of this house, will be

be handed down to the remotest posterity, not as a trophy of victory but a badge of treachery."

On the rejection of the India bill by "an infamous string of bedchamber janissaries," as the titled opponents of the measure were contemptuously and indignantly styled; and the consequent dismission of the coalition-administration, with some extraordinary marks of personal displeasure on the part of the sovereign, the house of commons came to various strong resolutions in support of their privileges, which were conceived to be attacked by the formation of a ministry which did not possess their confidence. An address, in the first instance, was voted to the king, stating, "that alarming reports of an intended dissolution of parliament had gone forth, and humbly representing to his majesty the inconveniences and dangers of a prorogation or dissolution of parliament in the then situation of affairs; and also entreating the sovereign to hearken to the advice of that house, and not to the secret advice of particular persons who might have private interests of their own separate from the

the true interests of the king and people." Soon after the house adjourned for the usual Christmas recess to the 12th of January.

After the recess, Mr. Fox, in a committee on the state of the nation, moved two resolutions, one prohibiting the issue of any other public money from the treasury, exchequer, or bank of England, after a prorogation or dissolution of parliament, unless the supplies should be previously appropriated by act of parliament: the other deferring the second reading of the mutiny bill to the 23d day of February. The object of these resolutions was to render a dissolution of parliament impracticable, and, though warmly opposed by Mr. Pitt and his friends, they were carried without a division.

Two resolutions of a more direct and hostile nature to the ministry were then moved by the earl of Surrey—1. "That in the present situation of his majesty's dominions, it was peculiarly necessary that there should be an administration which had the confidence of that house and the public."

2. "That

2. "That the late changes in his majesty's councils had been immediately preceded by dangerous and universal reports, that the sacred name of the king had been unconstitutionally used to affect the deliberations of parliament; and that the appointments made were accompanied by circumstances new and extraordinary, and such as did not conciliate or engage the confidence of that house." These motions were carried by a majority of 196 to 142 voices.

In the course of the debates on the earl of Surrey's motions, it was mentioned by a member of the house (General Ross), that a few days before, one of the lords of the bed-chamber, whom he afterwards stated to be the earl of Galloway, had desired to see him at his house, where the noble lord told him that if he voted against the new administration, he would be considered as *an enemy to the king*. This information, though no proceedings were adopted in consequence of it, appeared to have great weight in the determinations of the independent members of the house.

On

On the 16th of January, lord Charles Spencer moved; "That the continuance of the present ministers in trusts of the highest importance and responsibility, was contrary to the principles of the constitution, and injurious to the interests of his majesty and his people." In the debates on his motion, Mr. Fox admitted, in the fullest extent, the right of the crown to chuse its own ministers, but insisted also that it was the privilege of parliament to decide on the conduct of ministers, on the peculiarity of their introduction into office, and on those circumstances which either entitle them to the confidence or reprobation of the house. On a division there appeared for the motion 205, against it 184.

About this period various meetings of respectable and independent members of the house of commons, unconnected with the rival leaders, were held at the St. Alban's Tavern, for the purpose of effecting a coalition of parties. Addresses were presented from these gentlemen, who amounted to near eighty in number, to the duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt, expressive of their

anxiety

anxiety to have an administration formed on liberal and comprehensive principles, and entreating them to communicate with each other on the arduous situation of public affairs, trusting, that by a frank and unreserved intercourse between them, every impediment might be removed to a cordial co-operation of great and respectable characters, acting on the same public principles, and entitled to the support of independent and disinterested men.

In answer to this application, both parties expressed themselves desirous of complying with the wishes of so respectable a meeting; but the duke of Portland conceived, that an interview with Mr. Pitt could not possibly tend to an union, as long as that gentleman remained in his ministerial capacity, in defiance of the resolution of the house of commons of the 16th of January, above quoted. On the other hand, Mr. Pitt declined resigning, either actually, or, as it was afterwards suggested, virtually, as a preliminary to negociation; and consequently the attempt at

an union of parties was stopped in the threshold of the business.

But, that the pride or obstinacy of the minister might not pass unreprehended, on the 2d of February, after a motion had been carried unanimously, "That the present arduous and critical situation of public affairs required the exertions of a firm, efficient, extended, and united administration, entitled to the confidence of the people, and such as might have a tendency to put an end to the unfortunate divisions and distractions of this country," a second resolution was proposed, declaring, "That the continuance of the present ministers in office was an obstacle to a firm, efficient, extended, and united administration."

It was remarked by Mr. Fox, in the course of the debates on these resolutions, that the present contest was not against men, but ministers unconstitutionally called into office. The punctilio which required to be adjusted was, in fact, between that house and the servants or servant of

the crown; and the question to be decided, was, whether the minister's opinion and authority, or that of the house of commons, was to prevail? The prerogatives of the crown had been mentioned, as not a little affected by the proceedings of that house. He was sorry it had so happened that the distinction which the constitution had established between a free and an absolute monarchy, required so often to be stated. The most consummate ruin, he declared, would be the inevitable and immediate consequence of carrying any of those prerogatives which distinguish the respective estates of the constitution to excess. But was that house on all occasions constantly to be overawed by prerogative? Were the royal powers which the constitution vested in the crown intended to have such an operation? No man, he trusted, would hold such opinions; no man dared to hold such language in a free parliament.

The prerogatives of the commons were many; but who would affirm that they were intended to

act in a manner opposite to, or inconsistent with, the public welfare? It was precisely the same case in both. His majesty undoubtedly had the power of chusing his own ministers, and the house of commons of assigning the supplies. But were the one to take into his service any men, or set of men, most desirable to the royal inclination, without any regard to how such an appointment might operate on the public, might not the house, with the same propriety, withhold the purse of the people? Both extremes were to be avoided, because equally injurious to the public welfare, and that constitution, which depends on the tendency of all its separate and combined virtues to one great and substantial object.

This he stated to shew, how carefully the several powers of the constitution guarded against that proneness to abuse which adhered to all executive governments; and we were undoubtedly taught by it this lesson, that the crown was endowed with no faculty whatever of a private nature; that all its functions were instituted for public

public benefit; and that whenever they were otherwise employed, the constitution and the country were essentially affected.

But it might be asked, why had that house so much interest in the choice of ministers? And why were all the operations of the constitution endowed with this public tendency? The reason, which, to his mind, was perfectly satisfactory, was, that as the business of the public were only so many actions of confidence and trust, the minister was consequently under the necessity of possessing the good opinion of the house of commons in an eminent degree, in order to be enabled to conduct an active and vigorous government.

Mr. Fox then proceeded to state the cases in which it was peculiarly necessary that the minister should possess the confidence of the house of commons. These related principally to voting money upon estimates, which, he contended, the commons could not with propriety do, unless they had a perfect confidence in the men by whom they were made.

The great obstacle to that desirable union of parties which so respectable a body of individuals in that house had so much at heart, was, he declared, the conduct of the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt), who refused to resign a situation, in which it were treachery to the house, to the public, and to the constitution, to admit his continuance. The resolutions of the commons were opposed to the appointment of the crown. Whether, therefore, were the commons to be supported in opposition to the minister, or the minister in opposition to the commons? Would such a competition bear a question in that house? The dignity of the house could not yield to him, nor to any individual whatever ——. The minister owed his appointment to an undue influence, which he had ever struggled against, and would continue to struggle against while he had a seat in that house; and he was surprised that the right honourable gentleman, in opposition to a principle so plain and constitutional, should continue, as he did, to bid defiance to that majority in parliament by which their decisions were regulated, and without which no minister

minister had ever presumed to look the house of commons in the face. What could be his object? Did he expect that his own arm would bring salvation to an empire thus reduced by a principle to which the behaviour of the right honourable gentleman was so strong a confirmation? Could any doubt be entertained, but his noble friend (lord North) would still have been in office, but for his resolution to discountenance every appearance of that influence which was so perfectly unknown to the constitution. It was a dark, but powerful one, so occult in its operations, and yet so forcible at the same time, that no individual could ever be a match for it.

Surely were this pernicious evil ever to be redressed by an individual, the right honourable gentleman's noble father was equal to the task. He had at least more popularity, more talents, more success, than any other minister this country ever had; and he would undoubtedly have done much, but for one imperfection which he had always deemed his greatest. He trusted too much to his own superior abilities, which, tran-

scendant as they were, that secret influence, which had done so much mischief ultimately, completely overcame at last. For his part, he was sincerely disposed to the same object. Secret influence had ever, and he hoped ever would have, his cordial abhorrence. But he would never go on a Quixotic errand, or forlorn hope, of thinking his single exertions equal to a task so enormous. This had determined him to unite with all the forces he could muster together, and the event proved how proper his precautions had been, and at the same time how ineffectual. This influence, while it continued in force, rendered all the efforts of the house, after any reformation in the constitution, nugatory and abortive; and it mattered not much, who were in, or who were out, while the system continued so perfect, unbroken, and connected throughout. It was this baneful system which had proved so prolific of calamities to this country; and to oppose such a system with effect, the house could not depart from the spirit it had assumed. Was it possible, after considering these things fairly and deliberately, to account for the obstinacy of the minister?

minister? What motive could prevail with him thus to tantalize the public, and insult that constitution which constituted our greatest excellence and glory? By what topics could the secret advisers of his majesty blind at once the minds of the master and servant? How was it possible for them to find any thing like reason in their persuasions and importunities on a point so obvious and notorious? Did they presume to tell the minister, that he would depart from his dignity by acceding to the wishes of the house? Could he believe that such an idea would correspond with the sentiments of the right honourable gentleman, he should not think so highly of him as he did. Where was the condescension in yielding his own judgment to theirs, in prefering the collected wisdom of the house to his own understanding? In his mind, this would be paying that deference to parliament which, instead of degrading him, would raise him in the opinion of all who had any solid regard for the constitution.

Was it then a lessening of majesty to suppose his

his choice in this instance to have proved thus abortive? "O foolish advisers of their king!" exclaimed Mr. Fox. "He whose only and most glorious throne is in the hearts of a loyal and grateful people, to be thus at variance with their representatives, does your advice peculiar credit! Ye would honour him with the foulest dishonour that ever can happen to a sovereign! We would make him respected all over the world; we would make him a blessing to his subjects; we would make his reign happy to himself, and happy to all who are interested in his prosperity; we would make him the glorious and patriotic monarch of a wise, contented, and pacific nation: but your counsels are the direct opposite of all this. How do you exhibit him all over Europe? Not as possessing the cordiality of his subjects, or in friendship or amity with that house, but as squabbling and contending against those on whom he depends, from whom his supplies originate, and without whom his prerogatives were insignificant and useless."

These things he thus stated, that the conduct

duct of the house might not be misconstrued and coloured so as to abuse the public, and give an appearance to their actions contrary to the truth; for it was now as clear and evident as language could make it, that it was not a contest between parties, or between any description of men, but between that house and some individuals who had thought themselves, from what motives nobody knew, in a condition to despise its resolutions, its laws, and its censures. This was therefore no private, no sinister contention, at least on one side, but an open one, in which the minister and the constitution were parties. It could therefore be no question with those who were firm friends of the one, whether they were connected with the other or not.—The constitution and secret influence were at odds, and the decision could not be very distant. He, for one, had exerted himself from the moment he came into public life, and he would, he trusted, continue his utmost for the utter annihilation of what had ever struck him as the greatest curse to which this unhappy country was subjected.

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The way to power by this strange channel was totally inconsistent with the liberal genius of that freedom which had ever been the basis and glory of Englishmen. On this system what was a minister in the British house of commons, but a counsel for the crown, against the interest and inclination of the people, whose power in the scale of the constitution being thus annihilated, their representatives would sink to the meanest cyphers, and could only have permission to sit in that house, while a shadow of their concurrence was necessary to satisfy the demands of the crown. They would then find the measure of their insignificance complete; and the constitution, for which their ancestors fought and bled so gloriously and profusely, would perish by those very men whom they delegated to be its guardians.

In another part of the debate, the same evening, Mr. Fox said, "Attacks have been made on my popularity. My invasion of chartered rights has been held up as a stalking horse to the public. I have been charged with ambition. But on what grounds

grounds have these accusations been established? Have I ever set myself in defiance to this house? Have I ever sought power through the means of base corruption, or dark intrigue? No! my ambition has ever raised me above such modes of preferment. I have never sacrificed my principles to my popularity, nor to my ambition. I have ever acted openly and fairly, I would rather be rejected, reprobated, and proscribed; I would rather be an outcast of men in power, and the follower of the most insignificant minority, than prostitute myself into the character of a mean tool of secret influence."

One of the great objections urged against Mr. Fox at this period was, that his personal love of power was so strong, that it would prevent him from ever suffering the government of the country to go on, unless he made a part of it. To this Mr. Fox replied, that it was a fact perfectly well known, even to the most violent of his opponents, that had personal power been his object, he might have possessed it again and again, if he would have stooped to the means to have obtained it.

it. But if he had any wish for power, it was not that particular species of personal power for which he wished. The whole conduct of his life, the situation in which he stood, connected with a great and numerous body of men, whose principle it was to act upon the broad extended basis of public confidence, and not upon the narrow, pitiful, and destructive ground of private favour, must prove the falsehood of every assertion, that personal power was his object.—It had hitherto been objected against him, that he fought with too large a phalanx, that he came with so great a body, and with such numerous friends, that no door was scarce wide enough to admit them all. He thanked God that they were so numerous that they could not find a way through the passage to power, which was now the road to it. He did not therefore oppose the present administration for the sake of personal power; he opposed them, because they stood upon the ground of secret influence; because they stood upon the ground of the house of lords against the house of commons; because, by their continuance in office, they subverted every practical principle of

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the constitution of the country; because, at a time when a firm and efficient government was alone calculated to retrieve the country, they formed a government that was weak, insufficient, and feeble. Whoever wished for the liberty of the constitution, whoever wished for energy in the government, must equally unite in wishing the removal of the present administration. He who was a whig, and carried the principles of whiggism to extremity, must equally wish with a tory, who carried to an extreme the principles of toryism. A whig, who carried principles of whiggism to an extreme, might be said, in his enthusiastic, eager, and glorious love of freedom, to forget the true balance of the constitution. He might wish to give more to the popular part of the constitution, than was consistent with a vigorous, active, and efficacious executive government. He might carry his zeal in favour of liberty to an excess prejudicial to firmness and vigour. But let the extreme whig, however, forget vigour ever so much, or court liberty with the most anxious eagerness, he could never hope to obtain, nor to protect the cherished object of

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all his actions, without supporting the weight that house had held in the constitution, without a single exception, since the revolution: consistent with his principles, the extreme whig must wish the destruction of an administration formed in direct contradiction to every principle of constitutional liberty. On the other hand, a tory, who carried his principles to an extreme, and he did not mean that misled and deluded description of men, who, in the last century, had wished to support the misguided house of Stuart in all their wild pretensions to divine, hereditary, and indefeasible right, and had maintained their doctrines with arguments drawn from the unconstitutional tyranny of the house of Tudor, but those who reasoned rationally, though perhaps rather to a degree of excess upon their way of viewing the constitution. A tory, in the extreme principles of toryism, might be said to overlook the liberty of the subject in his desire of a vigorous, efficacious, and energetic government. But, however strong the bias of a tory might be to the extreme principle of his party, he must agree with him in this, that there could be no energy, no vigour,

vigour, no activity, no responsibility, none of those strong and powerful exertions which he wished to promote, while the present administration remained. Such a tory must see, that with their continuance, weakness, insufficiency, want of real, solid, and useful exertion, must distinguish the executive power. The whig, therefore, as well as the tory, and the tory equally with the whig, however opposite their principles, although the one overlooked vigour in his search for liberty, and although the other might be said to overlook liberty in his search for a vigorous government, both must equally agree, that to obtain their favourite and darling objects, the removal of the present administration was essential, because while they continued in office, there was neither freedom of constitution, nor energy of government. The true, solid, and uncontrovertible basis, upon which a firm and efficacious government was to be built, was the confidence of that house. Every act of ministers, as he had said again and again, was founded in confidence: not in the mere abstract meaning of the word,

but in the solid, actual, and constant exercise of substantial confidence.

Mr. Fox then proceeded to draw a melancholy picture of the state of the nation, of our relations with foreign powers, and, above all, of the necessity of the adoption of speedy measures for the better regulation of the British empire in India. Could any of these objects, he asked, be accomplished, in the present situation of the country? There was yet strength enough left to render the country great and important amidst the nations that surround us, but our strength could not be exerted unless the executive power possessed the confidence of that house.

Throughout the whole of the parliamentary proceedings of this interesting and extraordinary period, Mr. Fox appears to have acted under the impression of a sincere and unequivocal spirit of conciliation. There was nothing that a man of principle and honour could have yielded to, which he did not repeatedly declare his willingness

to concede. Much clamour had been excited against those provisions of his India bill, which removed the patronage of that wealthy empire from the hands in which it had hitherto been vested, and placed it under the control of commissioners of Mr. Fox's nomination. This obnoxious and unpopular feature of his bill, Mr. Fox declared himself ready to modify in any way to meet the views of his political opponents, provided that, whatever new system was adopted for the better government of India, it should have a fixed period for its operation, and not be liable to be changed at the will and pleasure of any new set of ministers, who might happen to come into office.

All Mr. Fox's advances, however, were treated by the minister, if not with supercilious disdain, at least, with mortifying coldness; nor did lord North's generous and disinterested offer to withdraw whatever pretensions he had to a share of power,—and the pretensions of this amiable, but unfortunate, statesman stood high, whether we consider his talents, or the powerful host of

friends who were bound to him by personal attachment—experience a more favourable reception from the new premier.

In the mean while the clamour against the coalition was artfully and industriously kept alive; and it must be admitted that the new administration, however unacceptable to the house of commons, possessed the good wishes of a majority of the nation out of parliament. The popular voice was in their favour, and they had the decided support of the great commercial corporations. The public opinion necessarily has great weight in a body so constituted as the British house of commons, and, as no means were left unresorted to, to procure the expression of it, so a correspondent effect was naturally produced on the commons. The firmness of the minister increased in proportion as the majorities of his opponents diminished, and to the second address of the commons to the throne, which was carried by a majority of twelve only, the king returned an answer to the following effect.

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"I have already expressed to you how sensible I am of the advantages to be derived from such an administration as was pointed out in your unanimous resolution; and I assured you, that I was desirous of taking every step most conducive to such an object.

"I remain in the same sentiments, but I continue equally convinced, that it is an object not likely to be obtained by the dismission of my present ministers.

"I must repeat, that no charge, or complaint, nor any specific objection, is yet made against any of them. If there were any such grounds for their removal at present, it ought to be equally a reason for not admitting them as a part of that extended and united administration you state to be requisite.

"I did not consider the failure of my recent endeavours as a final bar to the accomplishment of the purpose which I had in view, if it could have been attained on those principles of fairness and equality, without which it can neither be

honourable to those who are concerned, nor lay the foundation of such a strong and stable government as may be of lasting advantage to the country; but I know no farther steps which I can take, that are likely to remove the difficulties which obstruct that desirable end.

"I have never called in question the right of my faithful commons to offer me their advice on every proper occasion, touching the exercise of any branch of my prerogative. I shall be ready, at all times, to receive and give it the most attentive consideration: they will ever find me disposed to shew my regard to the true principles of the constitution, and to take such measures as may best conduce to the satisfaction and prosperity of my subjects."

His majesty's answer was taken into consideration on the 8th of March, when the following representation, on the motion of Mr. Fox, was ordered to be presented to the king*.

"That

* We may gather something of the value which Mr. Fox attached

"That an humble representation be presented to his majesty, most humbly to testify the surprise and affliction of this house on receiving the answer which his majesty's ministers have advised to the dutiful and seasonable address of this house, concerning one of the most important acts of his majesty's government.

"To express our concern that when his majesty's paternal goodness has graciously inclined his majesty to be sensible of the advantage to be derived from such an administration as was pointed out in our resolution, his majesty should still be induced to prefer the opinions of individuals to the repeated advice of the representatives

attached to this representation, and how much it was the desire of that great statesman to identify himself with the manly and constitutional sentiments it expresses, from the circumstance that the "Representation of the commons, March 8, 1784," and his "Bill for the better government of India," are conspicuously introduced on a table which accompanies the excellent portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, not long afterwards, and of which an engraving has been published.

of his people in parliament assembled, with respect to the means of obtaining so desirable an end.

" To represent to his majesty that a preference of this nature is as injurious to the true interests of the crown, as it is wholly repugnant to the spirit of our free constitution; that systems founded on such a preference are not in truth entirely new in this country; that they have been the characteristic features of those unfortunate reigns, the maxims of which are now justly and universally exploded; while his majesty and his royal progenitors have been fixed in the hearts of their people, and have commanded the respect and admiration of all the nations of the earth, by a constant and uniform attention to the advice of their commons, however adverse such advice may have been to the opinions of the executive servants of the crown.

" To assure his majesty that we neither have disputed, nor in any instance mean to dispute, much less to deny, his majesty's undoubted prerogative of appointing to the executive offices of

of the state such persons as to his majesty's wisdom shall seem meet: but, at the same time, that we must, with all humility, again submit to his majesty's royal wisdom, that no administration, however legally appointed, can serve his majesty and the public with effect which does not enjoy the confidence of this house: that in his majesty's present administration we cannot confide: the circumstances under which it was constituted, and the grounds upon which it continues, have created just suspicions in the breasts of his faithful commons, that principles are adopted, and views entertained, unfriendly to the privileges of this house, and to the freedom of our excellent constitution; that we have made no charge against any of them, because it is their removal, and not their punishment, which we have desired; and that we humbly conceive we are warranted, by the ancient usage of this house, to desire such removal without making any charge whatever; that confidence may be very prudently with-held, where no criminal process can be properly instituted: that although we have made no criminal charge against any individual of his majesty's

majesty's ministers, yet with all humility, we do conceive, that we have stated to his majesty very distinct objections, and very forcible reasons, against their continuance: that with regard to the propriety of admitting either the present ministers, or any other persons, as a part of that extended and united administration, which his majesty, in concurrence with the sentiments of this house, considers as requisite; it is a point upon which we are too well acquainted with the bounds of our duty, to presume to offer any advice to his majesty; well knowing it to be the undoubted prerogative of his majesty to appoint his ministers without any previous advice from either house of parliament; and our duty humbly to offer to his majesty our advice, when such appointments shall appear to us to be prejudicial to the public service.

"To acknowledge, with gratitude, his majesty's goodness, in not considering the failure of his recent endeavours as a final bar to the accomplishment of the gracious purpose which his majesty has in view, and to express the great concern

concern and mortification with which we find ourselves obliged to declare, that the consolation which we should naturally have derived from his majesty's most gracious disposition, is considerably abated by understanding that his majesty's advisers have not thought fit to suggest to his majesty any farther steps to remove the difficulties which obstruct so desirable an end.

" To recall to his majesty's recollection, that his faithful commons have already submitted to his majesty, most humbly, but most distinctly, their opinion upon this subject; that they can have no interests but those of his majesty and of their constituents; whereas it is needless to suggest to his majesty's wisdom and discernment, that individual advisers may be actuated by very different motives.

" To express our most unfeigned gratitude for his majesty's royal assurances that he does not call in question the right of this house to offer their advice to his majesty on every proper occasion, touching the exercise of any branch of his

his royal prerogative, and of his majesty's readiness, at all times, to receive such advice, and to give it the most attentive consideration.

"To declare that we recognize in these gracious expressions those excellent and constitutional sentiments, which we have ever been accustomed to hear from the throne since the glorious æra of the revolution, and which have peculiarly characterized his majesty, and the princes of his illustrious house; but to lament that those most gracious expressions, while they inspire us with additional affection and gratitude towards his majesty's royal person, do not a little contribute to increase our suspicions of those men who have advised his majesty, in direct contradiction to these assurances, to neglect the advice of his commons, and to retain in his service an administration whose continuance in office we have so repeatedly and so distinctly condemned.

"To represent to his majesty, that it has anciently been the practice of this house to withhold

hold supplies until grievances were redressed, and that if we were to follow this course in the present conjuncture, we should be warranted in our proceeding, as well by the most approved precedents, as by the spirit of the constitution itself; but if, in consideration of the very peculiar exigencies of the times, we should be induced to wave for the present the exercise, in this instance, of our undoubted legal and constitutional mode of obtaining redress, that we humbly implore his majesty not to impute our forbearance to any want of sincerity in our complaints, or distrust in the justice of our cause.

" That we know, and are sure, that the prosperity of his majesty's dominions in former times has been, under Divine Providence, owing to the harmony which has for near a century prevailed uninterruptedly between the crown and this house. That we are convinced that there is no way to extricate this country from its present difficulties, but by pursuing the same system to which we have been indebted at various periods of our history for our successes abroad, and which

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is at all times so necessary for our tranquillity at home. That we feel the continuance of the present system to be an innovation upon that happy system.

"That we cannot but expect from their existence under the displeasure of this house, every misfortune naturally incident to a weak and distracted government; that if we had concealed from his majesty our honest sentiments upon this important crisis, we should have been in some degree responsible for the mischiefs which are but too certain to ensue.

"That we have done our duty to his majesty and our constituents in pointing out the evil, and in humbly imploring redress: that the blame and responsibility must now lie wholly upon those who have presumed to advise his majesty to act in contradiction to the uniform maxims which have hitherto governed the conduct of his majesty, as well as every other prince of his illustrious house; upon those who have disregarded the opinions, and neglected the admonitions of the

representatives

representatives of his people, and who have thereby attempted to set up a new system of executive administration, which, wanting the confidence of this house, and acting in defiance to our resolutions, must prove at once inadequate, by its inefficiency, to the necessary objects of government, and dangerous, by its example, to the liberties of the people."

This representation was the last effort of the opposition to shake the power of the new administration, and was carried only by a majority of one. A few days afterwards all the supplies having been regularly voted, the parliament was prorogued, and on the 24th of March was dissolved by royal proclamation.

Mr. Fox immediately declared himself a candidate for the city of Westminster, and published the following addresses to the electors.

"Gentlemen,

"His majesty's ministers having thought fit, in contradiction to their own declarations, in defiance

fiance of the sense of the house of commons, and without any public pretence whatever, to subject the nation to all the inconveniences which must infallibly attend a dissolution of parliament at the present moment, I humbly beg leave, once more, to solicit the favour of your votes and interest, to represent this great and respectable city.

"To secure to the people of this country the weight which belongs to them in the scale of the constitution, has ever been the principle of my political conduct.

"Conscious that in every situation (whether in or out of office) I have invariably adhered to this system, I cannot but flatter myself that you will again give your sanction to those principles which first recommended me to your notice, and induced you, at two subsequent periods, to honour me with your suffrages.

"I have the honour to be, &c. &c.

C. J. Fox."

"St. James's Street, March 24.

" To the worthy and independent electors of the
" city and liberty of Westminster.

" Gentlemen,

" When the present popular delusion in favour of the present ministry was supposed to be most prevalent, I was confident that the good sense and steadiness of the electors of Westminster would be proof against every art and every temptation.

" The unparalleled success which I have experienced upon my canvass, fully justifies this confidence; and I have the greatest reason to expect that your partiality towards me will appear to have increased in proportion to the persecution of my enemies.

" As I have ever stood forth, and am resolved to continue firm to the cause of the people, so it is not to be wondered at that I should at all times be the object of the enmity of that pernicious faction whose principles are as adverse to the constitution, as the dark and secret manner in which they have endeavoured to enforce them.

" It would have been my most earnest wish to have paid my respects in person to every individual elector, if the extent of the city had not made it impossible.

" The very flattering reception I have met with among those whom I have had the opportunity of seeing, cannot but add to my regret upon this account.

" My public conduct is too well known to you to make any professions necessary; upon that ground I first experienced your partiality, upon that alone I can expect to retain it.

" To you who have approved it, I need say no more; and I will not be guilty of the unbecoming flattery to those who have differed from me, as to pretend that I shall in any degree deviate from that line of political conduct which first recommended me to your notice.

" Upon these tried principles, I beg leave once more to solicit your votes, interest and poll at the ensuing election; and I do assure you that

no expressions can do justice to the sentiments of gratitude and esteem, with which

"I am, gentlemen, your most obedient
"and devoted servant,
C. J. Fox."

"St. James's Street, March 31, 1784.

The third address of Mr. Fox, which we shall preserve, appeared at an advanced stage of the poll, when no exertions were left unresorted to by the court party to effect the defeat of the popular candidate.

" St. James's Street, April 26, 1784.

" To the worthy and independent electors of the
" city and liberties of Westminster.

" Gentlemen,

" The present state of the poll* exhibits a glorious example of what may be expected from the perseverance of independent men in the cause of liberty and the constitution.

" I beg leave most earnestly to solicit the continuance of your generous exertions in my favour. The importance of every individual vote is now sufficiently evident, and the number of electors who have assured me that they would come forward whenever it should appear that their vote might probably be decisive, leaves me in no doubt of success.

" The unprecedented exertions which the

* Mr. Fox, at this period of the poll was in a minority of 28 below sir Cecil Wray, but had gained on that day's poll a majority of 39 over the baronet.

servants

servants of the crown have thought themselves at liberty to make against me, as well by an indecent prostitution of the most sacred names, as by every other species of unconstitutional influence, have produced the effects naturally to be expected from such proceedings, by raising the spirit and awakening the indignation of every honest and independent elector.

" My public life is too well known to you to make any professions necessary. Those principles which brought about the glorious revolution, which seated his majesty's illustrious family upon the throne, and which have preserved the liberty of this constitution, have been the invariable rule of my political conduct.

" Upon these grounds I again presume to request your support, and if I should be happy enough to be re-elected representative of this great and respectable city, you may depend upon finding me a steady supporter of the whig cause, a determined enemy to that secret influence by which the present administration was created,

and an unalterable friend to the rights of the people.

"I am, with
"every sentiment of gratitude and respect,
"Gentlemen, &c. &c.
"C. J. Fox."

The rival candidates with Mr. Fox on this occasion were lord Hood and sir Cecil Wray, Mr. Fox's colleague in the preceding parliament, who, chiefly through his influence, had been chosen to represent Westminster on the vacancy occasioned by the elevation of sir George Rodney to the peerage, and who now, not without the imputation of ingratitude, became the decided opponent of his former friend and patron. No election was probably ever more severely contested. Never did party spirit run higher. It was a trial of strength between the court and the people. The court put forth all its strength to oppose Mr. Fox, and the people were roused to a correspondent energy in support of the champion of their rights. The poll commenced

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on the first of April, and continued open till the seventeenth of May. A large volume has been collected of the pasquinades which this election produced, but time has evaporated the spirit of their wit, and they who look into the volume I allude to, will find little in it but the coarse personalities and vulgar ribaldry which distinguished the saturnalia of an English election. But one feature of this contest must not be overlooked—the steady and zealous support which Mr. Fox received during the whole of the contest from the great whig families of England, and the honourable ardour with which his cause was espoused by females of the most distinguished rank. The house of Bentinck, then *sans honte*, the houses of Cavendish, Stanley, and Keppel, with many more illustrious whig names, true to the principles of their ancestors, lent the whole weight of their influence to support the cause of Mr. Fox; while the late amiable duchess of Devonshire, and other ladies of high birth, made an active and successful personal canvas in favour of the patriotic candidate.

At the conclusion of the poll the numbers were as follow :

For lord Hood - -	6,694
For Mr. Fox - -	6,233
For sir Cecil Wray -	5,998

Being a majority of 235 votes in favour of Mr. Fox over sir Cecil Wray. But previous to the close of the poll, a scrutiny was demanded by sir Cecil Wray and his friends, which being acceded to by the high bailiff, notwithstanding the arguments and protests of Mr. Fox, no return was made of the representatives for the city of Westminster; and at the meeting of parliament in May, Mr. Fox, thus precluded from taking his seat in the house of commons as one of the representatives for Westminster, appeared as member for the Scotch boroughs of Dingwall and Kirkwall.

At the commencement of the session, before the usual motion for an address, Mr. Lee stated to the house the conduct of the high bailiff of Westminster, who had neglected to make a return

turn to the writ of election, on pretence of not having finished the scrutiny into the legality of the votes, and concluded with moving a resolution, declaring it to be " his duty to return two citizens to serve for the said city." This motion, which was strenuously opposed by Mr. Pitt and the treasury bench, after a long debate, was negatived by a majority of 283 to 136: and a few days afterwards it was resolved on a motion of lord Mulgrave's, " that the high bailiff of Westminster do proceed in the scrutiny for the said city, with all practicable despatch."

In consequence of this resolution of the house, the high bailiff proceeded with the scrutiny during the remainder of the session, and during the recess. But the futility of the proceeding soon became obvious, and it was apparent to all dispassionate men, that it was persisted in for no other reason than to harass and insult the personal feelings of Mr. Fox. When parliament met again in January 1785, not quite two parishes, out of the seven into which Westminster is divided, were finished, and yet the scrutiny had then

then continued for eight months. It was calculated (taking into consideration that one of the parishes already scrutinized was extremely small) that the business at that time gone through, was not more than an eighth of the whole. Of the votes on the side of Mr. Fox, seventy-one had been objected to in the first parish, and the objections made good only against twenty-five; in the same parish, out of thirty-two of the voters for sir Cecil Wray, which were objected to, twenty-seven were declared illegal.

In the second parish, out of two hundred objected to, Mr. Fox lost eighty; sir Cecil Wray, out of seventy five, at that time objected to (for the examination was not closed) had sixty struck off.

In this state the Westminster scrutiny again came before the house, upon a petition of several of the electors, the 8th of February, when the high bailiff, and his counsel Mr. Hargrave and Mr. Murphy underwent a long examination at the bar of the house, respecting the practicability

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of carrying on the scrutiny, and the difficulties and delays attending the same. The high bailiff gave in evidence, that, calculating from what had already been done, it would take certainly not less, but much probably a longer time, than two years, to finish the scrutiny.

The following day the business was resumed, and Mr. Welbore Ellis, after arguing strongly on the illegality as well as the impolicy of the scrutiny, the impracticability of bringing the business to a final issue, in any moderate time, the heavy expence with which it was attended to the parties, the just and severe complaints of an injured city, and the insufficiency of the miserable court to which it was referred, concluded by moving "that it appearing to the house, that Thomas Corbet, Esq. high bailiff for the city of Westminster, having received a precept from the sheriffs of Middlesex for electing two citizens to serve in parliament for the said city; and having taken and finally closed the poll on the 17th day of May last, being the day next before the day of the return of the said writ, be now directed

directed forthwith to make a return of his precept of members chosen in pursuance of it."

This motion was pertinaciously opposed by lord Mulgrave, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Dundas, sir Lloyd Kenyon (then master of the rolls) and all the leading members of the ministerial side of the house, who argued the subject not less warmly, than as if they had considered their existence in office to have depended on it: the other side was maintained with equal spirit and superior ability by Mr. Lee, Mr. Windham, whose powers of oratory was first displayed on this occasion, by lord North, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Fox, and others.

Mr. Fox contended that the question before the house was, whether the scrutiny was legal? He would impeach it on three heads: Statute Law—the Practice of Parliament—and the Reason of the thing.—First then, he argued that by statute, the writ was returnable on the day specified in it; and this would clearly appear from the act of Henry VI, by which an action of debt was given to a person aggrieved by any return;

turn; the act provided that such action, however, should be brought within three months after the meeting of parliament. Our ancestors, who formed that act, must have looked upon the meeting of parliament, and the return of the writ, as convertible propositions; or it would have been absurd in them to give a man an action which could be so easily defeated, if the practice introduced by the present parliament had prevailed in the days of Henry VI, for the sheriff not making any return till three months, or, as might be in the present case, three years after the meeting, no action could be brought against him, because by law it must be brought within three months after the meeting, or not at all.

The next statute he would mention, was that of William III. which made it absolutely necessary that the sheriff should make his return on or before the day of meeting. In this surely was virtually included every inferior returning officer, who, by making their returns to the sheriff, must enable him to obey his writ, and transmit it to the crown office in due time, before the opening

opening of the session. It had been said by a learned judge (sir Lloyd Kenyon), that a writ for the election of a burgess during the sitting of parliament was not returnable within any limited time. The difference between that and the present case was very striking: the king was supposed best to know when a new parliament ought to meet, and, therefore, he summoned it to meet on the day which appeared to him most proper; and it was necessary that the commons should be fully represented before parliament proceeded to make laws; but it was different with respect to a vacancy made by death in a house of commons already sitting; for, the same reason for despatch not prevailing, the act of William III. required only that the return should be made within fourteen days after the election; but by the new mode lately introduced, a scrutiny might be demanded or ordered, and as it was the continuation of the poll or election, the actual close of the poll not being deemed a conclusion of the election, the precept might be held even for years by the returning officer, notwithstanding the act of William III.

He

He next maintained that a scrutiny, protracted beyond the exigency of the writ, was contrary to the uniform and invariable practice of parliament. In the great Oxfordshire election, the sheriff granted a scrutiny, which lasted till the day before his writ was returnable, and then closed it, contrary to the wishes and entreaties of the parties who had demanded it: he then returned all the four candidates: the house was not angry with the sheriff; on the contrary, it sat from day to day to determine who ought to have been returned as the sitting members, and pronounced in favour of Parker and Turner, against Dashwood and Wenman.

Lastly, he said, it was contrary to the reason of the thing; for if it was left in the power of returning officers to protract the return as they pleased (and who could find fault with or punish them, when they declared inexorable conscience to be the cause of delay?) a packed parliament might meet for shameful purposes; the members of Old Sarum, Midhurst, Thirske, Knaresborough, and the like, would take their seats, whilst the representatives

representatives of Westminster, Liverpool, Bristol, Newcastle, and every populous place, were not yet elected!

A scrutiny in itself was not a measure into which a returning officer was bound to go, except in the city of London, where a provision was made for it by a special act of parliament. If he was, why was not the sheriff of Bedfordshire punished by the house for refusing it? Why did not the house call to account the returning officers of Southwark, Lancaster, &c. who had also refused to grant a scrutiny. And here he begged leave to remark, that the doctrine broached by the right honourable gentleman, that "let the bad votes be on which side they might, a scrutiny ought to be granted," was truly dangerous; for in cases where the majorities were very small, as in Bedfordshire, where it was only of one, and in Southwark, where it consisted of eleven, &c. &c. a scrutiny demanded by the person who had the minority, and granted, would keep the legal members out of their seats, the electors unrepresented, and leave the members of decayed

decayed boroughs to transact the business for which such a parliament might have been packed. He had not a doubt then, that as this scrutiny was contrary to the statute law, to the practice of the house of commons immemorially, and to the reason of the thing, the only object that the minister could have in view was, to harass and persecute an individual, whom he had honoured, by distinguishing him from among a number of others, to make him the victim of his resentment. He had always wished to stand well with the right honourable gentleman: he remembered the day he had first congratulated the house on the acquisition of his abilities; it had been his pride to fight side by side with him the battles of the constitution, little thinking that he would one day desert his principles, and lend himself to be the instrument of that secret influence which they had both combated so successfully. He might have been prepared to find a formidable rival in the right honourable gentleman; a rival that would leave him far behind him in the pursuit of glory; but he never expected that he could

have descended so low, as to be the court persecutor of any man.

" I fancied," said Mr. Fox, alluding to his great rival, " I saw so much generosity of soul, so much elevation of mind, that so grovelling a passion as malice could not have found an asylum in his breast. If he thinks that it is merely for a seat in parliament that I am contending, he knows me not; but I was willing to take the hard task of stemming the tide of misrepresentation, that had artfully and studiously been disseminated through the kingdom: I was desirous that the citizens of Westminster, to whom my public measures were best known, who knew even my private foibles, as I had been bred and always lived among them, should pass judgment on my political conduct, and proud I am of the issue, which has taught the most distant parts of the kingdom that they were misled."

With regard to his election for Kirkwall, he assured the right honourable gentleman, who in the

the excess of his triumph had represented him as banished to Ultima Thule, that it was owing to an accident; and he declared upon his honour, that after he had heard that the greatest ornaments of this country had been sacrificed to the popular prejudices; when he heard that lord John Cavendish had been thrown out by the citizens of York, that general Conway, Mr. Coke, Mr. Baker, &c. had lost their elections, he was sorry that, by an election for any other place than Westminster, he had been robbed of the glory of suffering in such company. He saw plainly, he said, that it was a pecuniary contest, and that his friends were to be tired out by expence. The scrutiny on both sides could not cost less than 30,000l. a year: this was enough to shake the best fortunes. His own last shilling might be easily got at, as he was poor; but still, little as he had, he would spend it to the last shilling: if, in the end, he should lose his election, it would not be, he well knew, for want of a legal majority, but for want of money; and thus would he, perhaps, be deprived of his right, and the electors of Westminster of the man of their choice, be-

cause he was not able to carry on a pecuniary contest with the treasury. He would not, however, withhold from them the satisfaction of knowing, that, however zealous he and his friends might be, protraction must overcome them. His persecutors had only to be stubborn, and they must succeed. The present measure, with respect to Westminster, he said, he considered as a succedaneum to expulsion. The case of the Middlesex election, which had been so much reprobated, had at least the merit of being more manly; for here they accomplished the same end of expulsion, without daring to exhibit any charge against the person whom they expelled.

It had been alleged, that the bad votes had, on his part, been poured forth from the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John. Without dwelling on the circumstance that this had been said of every parish in its turn, he would appeal to the good sense of the house, and ask them whether they thought him or his agents so absurd or impolitic, as, even in the supposition of their using such means, that they should confine themselves to

to one parish only? Would they not at least have mixed their votes, and spread them over all the parishes, that they might the more probably pass unnoticed? Those who were willing to charge his agents with the iniquity of such means, would hardly suspect them of the folly of such an arrangement of the plan. Supposing, by the calculation of there being two hundred bad votes in one fourth part scrutinised, that in the end there would be eight hundred bad, was that any proof that his opponent would have a majority? Had any of the proceedings warranted such a belief? Certainly they had not; and when the minister, who, instead of an advocate, should have acted as a judge, mentioned St. Anne's parish, he should also have mentioned St. Martin's; but that he purposely forgot, because it would make against his calculation. In St. Anne's, where he stated the difference to be as five to three bad on the side of Mr. Fox, it was easily calculated, and would be found to be as seven to five; therefore, even supposing that sir Cecil Wray should strike off seven in every hundred of what he had polled, and he only five on every hundred of his

opponent's, still he should have a majority of one hundred: for by that mode sir Cecil Wray would strike off four hundred and thirty four, and he should strike off three hundred; but in St. Martin's parish the difference, on the gross amount of the poll, was not more than thirty, and the number disqualified on each side would be equal.

But if the doctrine was suffered of returning officers having a right to make no return, on a scrutiny being demanded, and the appearance of bad votes would be sufficient grounds to demand a scrutiny, it would be in the breast of sir Cecil Wray, or any losing candidate, to pour in bad votes, for the purpose to give a colour for a scrutiny, and by that means keep a gentleman out of his seat for three or four years. Among the various parliamentary reforms, which the minister was pledged to bring forward, was one for shortening the duration of parliament; but by the maxim adopted, the election would last longer than the parliament. The right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had been arguing, he said,

said, on false facts, and absurd hypotheses, and had not chosen to mention the delays occasioned by sir Cecil Wray's making wanton objections to votes that he could not sustain. And he must say of lord Hood, that he had been rather patient and submissive, if not negligent of the interests of the city which had so handsomely honoured him with their choice, in not striving to do them justice, in so far at least as his own seat was concerned. His election was unquestioned by all sides, and yet, under the same ridiculous and unwarrantable measure, he also was kept out of his seat, and Westminster continued totally unrepresented. He concluded with declaring, that if, to his astonishment, the house should be so infatuated by party as to forget what was due to the rights of election and the purity of representation, the question should not sleep. He assured them it should be brought on in one shape or another, again and again; and he had no doubt, ultimately, of seeing them come to a determination favourable to the people.

On a division of the house, the question for

the continuance of the scrutiny was carried by a majority of 39; the numbers for it being 174; against it, 135.

The business of the Westminster election was again brought forward on the 18th of February, by colonel Fitzpatrick, who presented a petition from the electors of Westminster, praying to be heard by counsel at the bar, in defence of their just rights and privileges, and to *state new facts*. The facts alluded to in the petition were, that since it had been alleged that Mr. Fox was particularly shy of going into a scrutiny of the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, on which particular stress was laid in a former debate, being supposed to be those parishes in which Mr. Fox was most vulnerable, Mr. Fox's counsel had been instructed to express his perfect readiness to enter immediately into those parishes, but this proposition was refused by the counsel of sir Cecil Wray.

Nothing was better calculated to shew the inexpediency and futility of the Westminster scrutiny

tiny than this. But the ministerial prejudice was not yet got over, and the motion for calling in counsel in support of the allegations of the petition, was superseded by an amendment, moved by Lord Frederic Campbell, restraining the counsel from entering into any arguments against the legality of the scrutiny. It was argued by some of the members of administration, that the business of the Westminster election was brought forward merely to harass and vex ministers, and impede the business of government, and that the ghost of the Westminster scrutiny was doomed perpetually to haunt the house.

To this Mr. Fox replied, that it was far from his inclination and from his intention to impede the public business of the nation: he had been greatly misunderstood, when it had been imagined he had said, that there should be applications made to parliament every week on the subject of the Westminster scrutiny; he had never said any such thing; but this he had said, that at every turn ministers would meet this scrutiny; they would find it standing in the way of a parliamentary

liamentary reform, and defeating all its purposes; they would feel that it had raised suspicions of the minister's sincerity, in declaring himself the friend and patron of reform. It had been remarked that there were only a few names to the Westminster petition; he did not expect to have heard such a remark; for though he might have procured thousands of signatures, if he had invited the electors to a public meeting, he thought it would be better to present a petition with a few names, than to disturb the quiet of the city by convening a meeting in Westminster Hall. He was not at all surprised that ministers should wish to be fairly rid of the scrutiny; it was high time for them to blush at it. A learned gentleman (Mr. Dundas) said, "the house was haunted day and night by the ghost of the Westminster scrutiny." The learned gentleman had probably assisted at some splendid representations of late (Macbeth), in which the ghost of a guilty conscience haunted the misdoer: he might well catch the idea, and tremble for his house of commons that had murdered the electors of Westminster, and left them aërial forms and spiritual

tual essences, without representatives: well might he be haunted by the ghost of the scrutiny; well might he fear it would push him and his friend from their stool. Where could he find a man who would not tell him he was tired of the scrutiny? Were not all the minister's friends tired of it? Did not their stomachs turn at it, not because it was nauseous from excessive sweetness, but from its extreme bitterness? Was there a learned man connected with the minister, who, out of that house, did not condemn, in the most pointed terms the beginning and prosecution of the scrutiny? He himself had heard, in another place (the court of King's Bench), a learned gentleman (Mr. Bearcroft), who knew how to treat with invective in the house the declared enemies of the scrutiny, speak of that proceeding with greater disapprobation than he could well have conceived; for he there heard him say, that all law and sense were confounded in the scrutiny. In this the learned gentleman was right; he could only wish that he would endeavour to be right always, and uniform, and not

find

find one doctrine for the bar and another for the senate.

There was no doubt that the majority of the house most heartily wished for the end of a proceeding that disgraced it; but how was that to be accomplished? Was it by rejecting both law and reason? By refusing to hear arguments which would make the absurdity of the proceeding appear in glaring colours? The poor expedient of the amendment proposed would be found truly futile, if the counsel, who were to appear at the bar, had a mind to evade it; and they would be able so to connect the evidence they had now to adduce with that which had already been given, as to introduce the one whilst they were seemingly only urging the other. He did not see, for his part, any expedient short of rescinding the resolutions already passed, to cure the wound that had been given to the constitution; for if the scrutiny was to be continued to the same length that the principles would go on which it was ordered, it would last for ever.

In

In discussing this point, two general propositions would be found to create insurmountable difficulties. One was the universal affirmative, that in every possible case whatever, the house was justifiable in granting and carrying on a scrutiny, when the returning officer's conscience required it. The other was the universal negative, that in no case whatever had the house a power to order a returning officer to make a return until his conscience should be satisfied. If the latter should be denied, what would be the consequence? Why, that the former must stand impeached; for if the house must order a scrutiny whenever the conscience of a returning officer called for it, it would follow, that the house could not, consistently with this delicate regard for conscience, compel the man to return the members as long as his conscience was undetermined; and therefore a scrutiny might last as long as a parliament. From this he hoped gentlemen would perceive the absurdity of the past proceedings of the house, and the necessity of providing a remedy for the wounded constitution of the country; and none could be effectual but

but the expunging of the past resolutions, and entering another upon the journals, passing upon the doctrines contained in them the most unreserved censure.

The ministerial amendment, notwithstanding the efforts of Mr. Fox and his friends, was carried by a majority of 52; upon which Mr. Erskine and Mr. Pigott, the counsel for the petitioners refused to plead under the restrictions laid upon them. The high bailiff of Westminster was then called to the bar, and examined as to the offer made by Mr. Fox's counsel to go immediately into the scrutiny of the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, and the opposition made to that proposal by the opposite party. It appeared from his evidence, which, however, was given with very obvious reluctance, that such an offer had been made by Mr. Fox's counsel, and sir Cecil Wray's friends had not deemed it expedient to accept it. This, after what had been said in the house of commons and the public prints of Mr. Fox's weakness in those parishes, produced a strong impression; and the high

bailiff

bailiff having withdrawn, on account of indisposition, colonel Fitzpatrick rose, and, after some observations on the slowness and insufficiency of the scrutiny, moved, " That it appearing to this house, that Thomas Corbet, Esq. high bailiff of the city of Westminster, having received a precept from the sheriff of Middlesex for electing two citizens to serve in parliament for the said city, and having taken and finally closed the poll on the 17th day of May last, being the day next before the return of the said writ, he be now directed forthwith to make a return of his precept of members chosen in pursuance thereof."

This motion was opposed by Mr. Dundas, Mr. Pitt, sir William Dolben, and some others. The arguments of the ministerial party in favour of the scrutiny were summed up in a few words by sir William Dolben. He thought it would be cruel to order the high bailiff to make a return until his conscience was satisfied, if it was three years thence; and so enamoured was he of the scrutiny, that sooner than put an end to it, he said, he would move to address his majesty to suffer

suffer it to go on, and to pay the expence on both sides, and to assure him, that the house would make good the same. In all popular bodies a certain portion of folly is an unavoidable ingredient. That an argument so absurd and a proposition so wild, as that I have noticed, should have occurred in a debate, cannot excite surprise, neither that they should have found supporters in such politicians as lord Mulgrave and Mr. Dundas; but that a man of Mr. Pitt's mind and name, a name that should have inspired him, at every step he took, with noble and elevated sentiments, that such a man, and one so descended, should have lent the high sanction of his authority, and the respect which the name of the son of Chatham was calculated to produce on his hearers, to such a mockery of justice, and that too at the very period when he was one of the most active advocates for a reform in the representation, is one of those lamentable aberrations of human nature, which cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by any of the known principles that influence human actions.

On

On a division of the house colonel Fitzpatrick's motion was rejected by a majority of nine only, the numbers for it being 136, against it 145. It was now pretty evident that the Westminster scrutiny, however anxious Mr. Pitt and the creatures who surrounded him might be to carry it on, would not much longer receive the countenance of the house of commons. Out of doors it was universally agreed that a mode of trial so vexatious, litigious, and abominable, did not exist, and even sir Cecil Wray himself, it was now known, wished to get rid of it. On the 3d of March, alderman Sawbridge made a motion on the subject similar in its tendency to that of colonel Fitzpatrick. He stated very forcibly, in the course of his speech, the real situation of the scrutiny, and said, that, if it were ordered to conclude immediately, sir Cecil Wray would be found to have gained only two by it, although Mr. Fox had not nearly gone through his list of bad voters in St. Martin's. With regard to the four hundred bad votes in the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Mr. Sawbridge said, it was highly improbable that half of them could

be established, and Mr. Fox would undoubtedly be able to set aside a great number of sir Cecil Wray's voters. He said farther, that about one fourth of the scrutiny was gone through, and it had taken nine months to proceed thus far; the whole, therefore, would not, in all likelihood, be completed in less than a year and a half. To what end continue so tedious and so fruitless a process?

Sir William Dolben and Mr. Pitt again defended the scrutiny; and the latter moved an adjournment, which passed in the negative, the numbers for the adjournment being 124, against it 162—majority 38.—The main question was then put, and carried without a division: and the high bailiff the following day made a return of lord Hood, and the right honourable Charles James Fox *. Thus, after a struggle of two

* Mr. Fox shortly afterwards brought an action in the court of King's Bench against the high bailiff, and recovered 2000l. damages. This sum was distributed among the public charities of Westminster.

years,

years, terminated the Westminster scrutiny. An attempt was soon after made by Mr. Fox to have the resolutions of the house, relative to the Westminster election, expunged from the journals; but this was strenuously resisted by Mr. Pitt and his friends. Indeed the conduct of Mr. Pitt in every stage of this transaction was unworthy of his talents, his station and his character: the spirit of personal animosity with which he seemed actuated against his illustrious rival, the pertinacity of his attacks, and the asperity of his language, were more suitable to the heat and intemperance of a popular election than the grave deliberations of a senate. In all this business Mr. Pitt shewed a want of candour and generosity, a meanness of temper, and a puerile jealousy of power, so undisguised, unabashed, and arrogantly expressed, that even those who love his memory best must be slow to rank magnanimity among the characteristics of his mind.

It may not be improper to say a few words, in this place, of the character of Mr. Pitt.

That statesman, haughty in his temper, obstinate in his opinions, and possessed of unbounded ambition, found himself, by a rare conjunction of circumstances, invested with a degree of power, which no minister in this country, since the days of sir Robert Walpole, had ever been possessed of. The preservation of this power became from that period the darling object of his life. He sacrificed to his love of power the constitutional principles of his youth, principles which, as in him they were hereditary, he ought to have cherished with filial affection. His entrance into office was through a breach in the constitution; and for the maintenance of authority thus surreptitiously obtained, he dissolved the most virtuous, upright and independent house of commons that England had seen for a long series of years*. If it

* His character as a parliamentary orator, was severely, but faithfully, pourtrayed by lord North, in the course of a speech on the Irish Propositions. It was peculiarly applicable to him at this period, as any one may perceive who will take the trouble to look into the parliamentary proceedings of the times. "There are some men," said the ex-minister,

it be too much to say all, it may confidently be affirmed that most of the calamities that have befallen this country for the last three and twenty years, may be traced to the dissolution alluded to. Its dangerous tendency as a precedent was well and prophetically described by Mr. Burke, when he said, "it is an experiment full of peril to put the representative wisdom and justice of his majesty's people in the wrong; it is a crooked and desperate design, leading to mischief, the extent of which no human wisdom can foresee, to attempt to form a prerogative party in the nation, to be resorted to as occasion shall require, in derogation of the authority of the commons of

ex-minister, "who seem to be organized for slander, there are some men who, by the peculiar temperament of their nature, find gratification in invective, and so eager are they for the gratification of their lust, that they go about to seek for blemishes, in order to expose them; and in the pursuit of their game, they will sometimes pretend to find them where they are not. Such men, if they propose any measure, are infinitely more desirous to make it stand upon the faults of others, than on its own merits; and such a man I take the right honourable gentleman to be."

Great Britain in parliament assembled: it is a contrivance full of danger, for ministers to set up the representative and constituent bodies of this kingdom, as two separate and distinct powers, formed to counterpoise each other, leaving the preference in the hands of the secret advisers of the crown. In such a situation of things, these advisers, taking advantages of the differences which may accidentally arise, or may purposely be fomented between them, will have it in their choice to resort to the one or the other, as may best suit the purpose of their sinister ambition. By exciting an emulation and contest between the representative and the constituent bodies, as parties contending for credit and influence at the throne, sacrifices will be made by both; and the whole can end in nothing else than the destruction of the dearest rights and liberties of the nation. If there must be another mode of conveying the collective sense of the people to the throne than by the house of commons, it ought to be fixed and defined, and its authority ought to be settled: it ought not to exist in so precarious and dependent a state, as that ministers should have it in their power,

power, at their own pleasure, to acknowledge it with respect, or to reject it with scorn.

" It is the undoubted prerogative of the crown to dissolve parliament; but we beg leave to lay before his majesty, that it is, of all trusts vested in his majesty, the most critical and delicate, and that in which the house has the most reason to require, not only the good faith, but the favour of the crown. His commons are not always on a par with his ministers in an application to popular judgment: it is not in the power of the members of this house to go to their election at the moment the most favourable for them. It is in the power of the crown to choose a time for their dissolution whilst great and arduous affairs of state and legislation are depending, which may be easily misunderstood, and which cannot be fully explained before that misunderstanding may prove fatal to the honour that belongs, and to the consideration that is due, to members of parliament.

" With his majesty is the gift of all the rewards, the honours, distinctions, favours, and

graces of the state; with his majesty is the mitigation of all the rigours of the law; and we rejoice to see the crown possessed of trusts calculated to obtain good-will, and charged with duties that are popular and pleasing. Our trusts are of a different kind. Our duties are harsh and invidious in their nature; and justice and safety is all we can expect in the exercise of them. We are to offer salutary, which is not always pleasing, counsel: we are to inquire and to accuse: and the objects of our inquiry and charge will be for the most part persons of wealth, power, and extensive connections: we are to make rigid laws for the preservation of revenue, which of necessity more or less confine some action, or restrain some function, which before was free: what is the most critical and invidious of all, the whole body of the public impositions originate from us, and the hand of the house of commons is seen and felt in every burthen that presses on the people. Whilst, ultimately we are serving them, and in the first instance whilst we are serving his majesty, it will be hard, indeed, if we should see a house of commons the victims of its zeal and fidelity, sacrificed

by

by his ministers to those very popular discontents which shall be excited by our dutiful endeavours for the security and greatness of his throne. No other consequence can result from such an example, but that, in future, the house of commons, consulting its safety at the expence of its duties, and suffering the whole energy of the state to be relaxed, will shrink from every service, which, however necessary, is of a great and arduous nature; or that, willing to provide for the public necessities, and, at the same time, to secure the means of performing the task, they will exchange independence for protection, and will court a subservient existence through the favour of those ministers of state, or those secret advisers, who ought themselves to stand in awe of the commons of this realm.

"An house of commons, respected by his ministers, is essential to his majesty's service; it is fit that they should yield to parliament, and not that parliament should be new modelled until it is fitted to their purposes. If our authority is only to be held up when we coincide in opinion with his majesty's

majesty's advisers, but is to be set at nought the moment it differs from them, the house of commons will sink into a mere appendage of administration, and will lose that independent character which, inseparably connecting the honour and reputation with the acts of this house, enables us to afford a real, effective, and substantial support to his government. It is the deference shewn to our opinion, when we dissent from the servants of the crown, which alone can give authority to the proceedings of this house, when it concurs with their measures *."

Such were the sentiments of this great orator on the dangers to be apprehended to the constitution, in 1784, from the conduct pursued by his majesty's then ministers. That those dangers have unhappily in too many instances been realised, the following pages of this work will sufficiently shew.

In the course of the session, and soon after the

* Representations moved to be presented to his majesty, by Mr. Burke, June 14, 1784.

decision

decision on the Westminster scrutiny, Mr. Pitt brought forward a motion for a reform in parliament. It was the third effort he had made for that purpose, and very sanguine expectations were entertained of its success, as in the month of December previous, Mr. Pitt had authorised Mr. Wyvill to declare, that he would bring the subject of a parliamentary reformation before the house of commons as early as possible in the following session; that he would support his intended propositions to the utmost of his strength, and that he would exert his whole power and credit, *as a man and as a minister, honestly and boldly,* to carry such a meliorated system of representation as might place the constitution on a footing of permanent security *.

Mr.

* As it may be curious to see what ideas Mr. Pitt entertained at this period of a parliamentary reform, a measure he afterwards so violently opposed, subjoined is a summary explanation of the principles on which his motion proceeded, as given at a public meeting by Mr. Wyvill, chairman of the Yorkshire

Mr. Fox, as he had done on former occasions, professed himself friendly to the measure of a reform

Yorkshire committee, with whom Mr. Pitt conferred on the formation of his plan.

The number of additional representatives to the great districts was proposed to be seventy-two, for which the disfranchisement of thirty-six small boroughs would be wanted. The means by which so considerable a surrender of the right to return members to parliament was expected to be obtained, was as follows.

It was proposed that a million sterling should be set apart, as a fund for compensation to the boroughs which might be disfranchised; that this whole sum be divided into thirty-six shares, of which, that each borough agreeing to surrender its elective right, and applying, by petition from two thirds of its electors, to parliament for that purpose, to be entitled to one share, to be distributed in due proportion among the several persons interested therein, according to their respective equitable claims, by a special committee of the house of commons, to be appointed in the same manner as committees are appointed to try the merits of contested elections; by which if any question should arise, touching the right of voting, or whether the petitioners were actually

two

form in parliament, and particularly to that part of Mr. Pitt's plan, which went to increase the proportion

two thirds of the voters, such questions should be decided: that the interest of these thirty-six shares, or several principal sums of money, be suffered to accumulate and be added to each principal sum, until, by the decision of such committee, each sum, principal and interest included, should be awarded to some small borough, on its voluntary application to be disfranchised. By this provision, the sum appropriated, if not large enough at first to induce the decayed boroughs to surrender their obnoxious rights, would continually increase, and the temptation to resign them would become ultimately irresistible.

By the other part of Mr. Pitt's system of reformation, a subsequent improvement of the borough representation was to be ascertained, and carried into execution on similar terms; and, moreover, a principle of future and perpetual improvement in the representation of towns to an indefinite extent was to be established.

When the representation of the counties and the metropolis should have been rectified in the mode and to the extent described, it was proposed that a second sum should be set apart to induce such decayed or inconsiderable boroughs,

proportion of representatives for counties, by a diminution of the members for boroughs.—With regard

roughs, as might still remain, to make a farther surrender of the right of electing members of parliament, in order that such right might be transferred to the towns of Birmingham, Manchester, and other large unrepresented places, whenever such unrepresented places should respectively petition parliament for the same.—Also, that the elective franchise, exclusively enjoyed by a few inhabitants, members of the corporate body in certain towns, might be imparted to the inhabitants, householders of such towns, occupying houses assessed at a certain small amount, on the voluntary application of such corporate bodies to parliament to surrender their exclusive privileges.

The extension of the right of suffrage to many substantial householders in the metropolis, the unrepresented towns, and those towns where the right of representation was exclusively enjoyed by a few inhabitants, would have been the necessary consequence of the several transfers, and communications of the elective right proposed in the two parts of this system. The admission of copyholders to the right of voting at county elections, was to form a still greater, and a perfectly unexceptionable, addition to the constituent body, for which, it was understood, that a separate

bill

regard to the dangers of innovation, he thought they had been greatly overrated. From the earliest periods of our government, the principle of innovation, but which should more properly be called amendment, was neither more nor less than the practice of the constitution. In every species of government (putting absolute monarchy out of the question, as one which ought never to take place in any country) democracy and aristocracy were always in a state of gradual improvement, when experience came to the aid of theory. But there were many parts of Mr. Pitt's plan which he thought highly objectionable. He would never agree to admit the purchasing from a majority of electors the property of the whole. In this he saw so much injustice, and so much repugnance to the true spirit of our constitution, that he could not entertain the idea for one moment.

bill would be provided accordingly. Regulations also for multiplying the places of poll in the counties, for the better ascertainment of the right of voting, for reducing expense, and preventing bribery at elections, were to have been included as subsidiary parts of the same system.

On

On the other hand, when the property of a borough was in one man, there was no chance of his disposing of it, on the terms that had been mentioned. For, when a particular sum was laid down for a particular purchase, and interest suffered to accumulate on that sum, the man must be a fool, who could be in haste to get possession of it. There was something, likewise, that he thought injurious in holding out pecuniary temptations to an Englishman to relinquish his franchise on the one hand, and a political principle which equally forbade it on another. He was uniformly of opinion, which, though not a popular one, he was ready to avow, that *the right of government was not property, but a trust; and that whatever was given for constitutional purposes, should be resumed, when those purposes should be no longer carried into effect.* There were instances of gentlemen offering to sacrifice the interest they might have in boroughs, to the public good*.

* The person particularly alluded to was Mr. Thomas Pitt, (created lord Camelford,) who, on a former agitation of this question, had made a voluntary offer to give up his interest in the borough of Old Sarum.

He

He expressed, however, his surprise that the present proposition was not attended by any liberal offers from those whom government had loaded with honours, and whose connection with the ministry should naturally excite an expectation of something more liberal than a procedure by mere bargain and sale. He was averse to the idea of confining parliamentary situations to men of large fortunes, or those who had distinguished themselves in public professions. Should this be the case, there was scarcely any man so little acquainted with the history of parliament, as not to know that the house would lose half its force. It was not from men of large and easy fortunes, that attention, vigilance, energy, and enterprise, were to be expected. Human nature was too fond of gratification not to be somewhat attentive to it, when the means were at hand; and the best and most meritorious public services had always been performed by persons in circumstances removed from opulence.—Mr. Fox observed that the objectionable parts of the plan might afterwards be amended; and concluded with

earnestly entreating all sides of the house to concur in the motion before them.

On a division the motion passed in the negative, notwithstanding the assurance of Mr. Pitt that he would exert all his power as *a minister* and *a man* to promote its success, the numbers against it being 248, for it 174 —majority against *the minister* 74.

It would far exceed the limits to which a work of this nature must necessarily be confined, to trace Mr. Fox through the whole of his illustrious parliamentary career; and such questions as the Irish commercial propositions, the commutation tax, and the revenue regulations for the year 1785, however interesting they might be in their day, have lost their importance in the magnitude of succeeding transactions. These chiefly occupied the attention of the house of commons during the remainder of the session, and were discussed (the Irish propositions in particular) with much vigour and ability. To give Mr. Fox's opinion

opinion at large upon these topics would lead to too great a length; yet it may not be improper to preserve a few of the political, commercial, and financial maxims of this great man, which were drawn from him by the questions above alluded to. On a motion by Mr. Pitt, (April 20, 1785,) for a repeal of certain duties on the cotton manufactures, which was seconded by Mr. Fox, the latter said, he desired not to be ranked in the number of those who held that manufactures, as manufactures, were improper objects of taxation; and had never, nor ever should, entertain such an opinion; on the contrary, he held that articles of manufacture were in many cases a fair and just object of taxation; in some undoubtedly they were not, and especially in such, where the imposition of a tax would so far harass the manufacturers as to take considerably more money from them than the revenue received, and check the progress of a manufacture, and prove so vexatious and oppressive, that it would affect its prosperity and endanger its existence. In the course of the speech of Mr. Pitt, that the ground on which he abandoned the

tax was, on account of popular prejudices, which were founded in error—Mr. Fox replied, that it was a principle he would never accede to, nor ought the house of commons ever to make it the rule of their proceedings; for if it were once known that a great degree of popular clamour and prejudice, no matter how ill founded, was a sufficient inducement for that house to give their consent to the repeal of any tax, the revenue would be in perpetual danger; and the sinking fund, to which they all looked forward with the most anxious expectation, would be only a matter to be talked of, and never to be brought into existence.

On the subjects of the sinking fund, the national debt, and the revenue, Mr. Fox, in a motion made by him, (April 29, 1785,) gave it as his opinion, that the true and only foundation on which the credit of this country could be maintained, was in the publicity and clearness of our accounts; in the fixed and resolute determination of parliament at all times to look their situation full in the face, and neither to deceive themselves, nor to deceive others with fallacious statements, which could only serve

serve interested purposes for the moment, while they might produce lasting and dreadful consequences. Perfectly to despond was as injurious as to be too sanguine. Despondency would depress the genius, enterprise, and energy of the country; while, on the other hand, to be too sanguine in our expectations, would prevent us from taking those measures which might be necessary to our deliverance.

Speaking, in the course of his argument, on the subject of a national bankruptcy, he said, it was a state of things which no considerate man could think of without horror. A national bankruptcy would be national ruin; and his head must be strangely dull, or his heart inhuman, who could harbour such a notion. It was not to be thought of; and yet he knew that strange, mad, and atrocious schemes had been engendered in the brains of some men to this effect, but no practical statesman had ever thought of them, and no good man, he trusted, would ever adopt them.

It was Mr. Fox's opinion, at this period, that the sinking fund ought to have been increased,

and he offered to share with the minister all the odium that might arise from laying fresh burthens upon the people. But his proposition was rejected, and he had only the barren honour of bringing forward a plan which time has shewn the sound policy and utility of, but the value of which his rival had not the discernment to appreciate. It was the peculiar misfortune of Mr. Fox's public life, that his recommendations were almost always adopted too late. His prescient mind looked to the future as well as the present; while his adversaries, anxious only for a system that provided for the exigencies of a passing session, loaded his opposition with the reproachful epithets of clamour and faction.—But he had, in a more eminent degree than any other statesman that ever went before him, the satisfaction, in most cases, to find the justice and sagacity of his opinions corroborated by the test of experience; and very few sessions passed over, in which the minister did not see the necessity of retracing some of his steps, and adopting the very measures which Mr. Fox had ineffectually urged.

The

The many personalities which Mr. Pitt, even at this period, was in the habit of indulging in against Mr. Fox and lord North, on the subject of their coalition, and the lofty terms in which he always spoke of himself, and of the high post he filled in his majesty's government, could not fail on some occasions to draw down upon him great severity of animadversion. In one instance in particular, after he had magnified his own importance, with all that pomp of language and solemnity of diction for which his oratory was so distinguished, and arrogated to himself the whole merit of the measures of government, Mr. Fox, in the course of his reply, pointedly reproved the supercilious disposition of the minister.—"I cannot help stopping," said he, "to make a remark on a curious distinction to which the right honourable gentleman appears most remarkably attached; a distinction that betrays a feeling that I cannot well describe—a sort of self complacency —a kind of over pleasure with his own situation. In speaking of the noble lord in the blue ribband at different periods, he is ever solicitous of distinguishing between the first lord of the treasury,

and the mere secretary of state. In the one character he ascribes to him all the dignity of sovereign rank, of superintendency, and sole authority —in the other, he rather considers him as acting under or with a ministry, than as a minister possessed of either power or responsibility. He says of him at one time, "when the noble lord was the minister of the country." At another, "when the noble lord held a subordinate situation in the cabinet." By these distinctions the right honourable gentleman takes a juvenile pleasure in glancing at his own elevation. He considers the personage who fills the united offices of chancellor of the exchequer, and first lord of the treasury, as a character so lofty and exalted, so supereminent in his station, that he must on no account be confounded with inferior persons. In like manner, when he talks of coalitions, and reprobates them, he is moved by the same feeling. His charge against me and others is for coalescing with the minister, the great superintending minister of the American war! His own coalitions he can very readily defend by the same distinction. "I own," he says, "I have certainly coalesced with

with some of the ministers who were concerned in the patronage and conduct of the American war: they, however, were inferior characters, lords chancellors of England, and such like persons of no account: but I have never been so infamous and abandoned, as to form a coalition with the chancellor of the exchequer, and the first lord of the treasury, the great superintending minister of the crown, who was the soul of the system." I do not, Sir, enlarge upon this feeling of the right honourable gentleman, as a charge against him: it is a feeling, in the enjoyment of which I am by no means inclined to disturb him: a feeling, in the enjoyment of which, I know indeed of no person that has any interest to disturb him; unless indeed there may be some of his immediate colleagues, who may think it would be somewhat more decent in him to gratify his passion or his pride in a mode less publicly offensive both to their spirit and their dignity."

The recent convulsion that has agitated Europe, that has wrecked so many of her mightiest states, and yet threatens those that survive with destruction,

tion, renders the politics of such a season of tranquillity as the year 1786, obsolete and uninteresting. Yet it may not be deemed unuseful to give, in a work like this, a brief view of the sentiments of such a statesman as Mr. Fox, on the then subsisting political relations between this country and the powers on the continent. At the opening of the session in 1786, Mr. Fox entered into a detailed examination of British and foreign politics. He professed himself in general friendly to continental connections, and blamed the impolitic conduct of his majesty's ministers in not cultivating them, and their negligence in being perpetually behind hand in all their foreign negociations. He begged gentlemen to recollect, that, in all her wars, France had been most embarrassed by her continental situation, and the dread of an attack from the neighbouring powers; the whole of her policy, therefore, had been directed to engage them in such a manner, as to add to her security, and hence it was that during her last (the American) war, she had been able to render her maritime force so respectable and so powerful, because she had no occasion to give her attention

attention to the strengthening of her frontier towns, the adding to her internal fortifications, the recruiting her garrisons, and all those variety of considerations necessarily kept alive, while it appeared possible for her continental neighbours to seize the opportunity of her being engaged in hostilities at sea. Nay, she was even able to aid her resources by a reduction of her army in time of war, and apply the saving to her maritime strength.

To counterbalance the power of France and her allies, he recommended a more close connection with the courts of Vienna and Petersburg. But what, said he, had been the conduct of ministers? They had disgusted the emperor of Germany, by the part which his majesty, as elector of Hanover, had taken in joining the elector of Saxony and other Germanic princes in a league founded on the plea of preserving the liberties of the empire.

Mr. Fox, after touching on the subject of an alliance with Russia, of which he strongly enforced

forced the necessity, next adverted to the negociation for a commercial treaty with France. He was decidedly of opinion that no good could result to this country from a commercial treaty between Great Britain and France, and his reason for thinking that such would be its effects was, that the experience of past times proved, that this country had grown great, prosperous, and flourishing, from the moment that she quitted all her commercial connections with France.

Mr. Pitt, in reply to what had fallen from Mr. Fox, with respect to the Germanic alliances entered into by his majesty in quality of elector of Hanover, said that with the merit or demerit of those transactions his majesty's servants had no concern. As to the connexion with Hanover, however accident had placed the sovereignty of that country, and of this, in the same hands, it by no means followed that the interests of each must necessarily be the same; tho' he was willing to admit, that, from the circumstance of their having one and the same sovereign, it was likely that their interests might sometimes be parallel, when without

without that circumstance they might prove different, and perhaps it might advance their mutual advantage to make their interests as reconcileable to each other as possible. Yet he desired to have it understood, that Great Britain was by no means committed or bound by any league lately entered into by the elector of Hanover; nor did he look upon it as incumbent on the ministers of this country to lay before parliament, except in cases of necessity, such arrangements as might be made for Hanover, by the advice of the ministers of that electorate.

The mere incidental discussions respecting Hanover which took place at this time, would scarcely deserve to be mentioned, except from the consideration that some of the latest and most important acts of Mr. Fox's public life had a material relation to that electorate; and some, with a prejudice certainly not very unnatural in Englishmen, may be curious to know what motives of partiality for his majesty's German dominions could possibly influence the opinion of so distinguished an English statesman. The affection which

which the two first princes of the house of Brunswick, who sat on the British throne, evinced for their electorial states, filled their subjects in this country with mixed sentiments of jealousy and disgust; and the popular orators in parliament found an easy road to the hearts of the people by stigmatising those measures of the court which they disapproved, with the epithet of Hanoverian politics. Mr. Pitt evidently founded his arguments upon their ideas; and, taking the popular side of the question, disclaimed all right or intention in the ministry of this country to interpose in the politics of Hanover.—Mr. Fox, in reply, said, however clearly the distinction between Great Britain and Hanover, as separate states, might be understood in that house, it was not an easy matter to teach foreign powers to understand the same discrimination. A variety of possible cases existed in which it would be almost out of the power of this country to adhere to any such distinction in practice, however clearly it might be defined in theory. It might, hereafter, happen, he said, that circumstances might render it an essential policy in Great Britain to join the court

court of Vienna, and to proceed in counteraction of the league to which Hanover had acceded. In that case, as all treaties were offensive in their effect, though nominally defensive, a war between the parties of the league and its opponents might probably arise. Granting the likelihood of such a war, could British troops act against those of Hanover Or, to make the case stronger, and yet to put a possible case, suppose the elector of Hanover were to head his troops in person, (and they were all aware that it was not a new thing for an elector of Hanover to take the command in the field,) who would say that the British army could be led to act hostilely against troops led by their sovereign in capacity of elector of Hanover? The supposition teemed with the most gross absurdity, and it was to shew the extraordinary predicament into which the elector of Hanover's becoming a party to a league of the nature in question, and without the advice of a minister responsible for his conduct to that house, might draw Great Britain, and involve its interests, that he brought forward such extraordinary cases. One historical example, however, would strengthen

en the arguments he had used, and prove beyond all doubt the mischief to which this country was liable to become exposed, by considering herself as wholly independent of the interests of Hanover. The case to which he alluded was that of George the First, who, by his treaty with Denmark for the sale of Bremen and Verden, drew down upon him the vengeance of Sweden; and the consequence was, this country was threatened with an invasion, the most alarming, and the most dangerous to the liberties of Englishmen, of any that could well be imagined. General Stanhope, at that time the minister of the crown, had, when the treaty was first heard of, come down to that house, and used precisely the same sort of language as that uttered by Mr. Pitt. He had talked of the separate and distinct interests of Great Britain and Hanover, and had said that the British parliament had nothing to do with the conduct of his majesty respecting his electorial dominions; but what was the consequence? The very next year, general Stanhope, who held this language, came down to the house, and urged the expenses which his majesty had incurred on account

account of his purchase as a plea for calling for additional supplies. If the matter was not now clearly and fully ascertained, so that foreign powers, as well as that house, might be certain that Great Britain was not committed as to any part which her policy might dictate to her as most adviseable to pursue hereafter, in the case of a war in Germany, the right honourable gentleman, who had disclaimed all responsibility for the wisdom and policy of the measure in question, might come down to that house, on a subsequent occasion, and make that very measure, respecting which the British parliament was excluded from all enquiry and control, the ground of an application for additional supplies. Mr. Fox concluded, by observing, that he never spoke concerning a point of state with less reluctance, persuaded that, on the present occasion, he neither divulged a secret, nor gave the slightest wound to the interest and security of the nation.

In the course of this and the following session, various warm discussions took place in the house of commons, relative to the modes of proceeding

proper to be adopted to bring the great India delinquents to justice. The share which Mr. Fox bore in these transactions is well known to every one in the least acquainted with the public transactions of the last twenty years. How zealously and indefatigably he laboured to vindicate the insulted honour of the British name; to defend the weak from the oppressions of the strong; and to bring to punishment those eastern plunderers whose multiplied enormities had laid waste and nearly depopulated many of the most fertile and flourishing provinces of Aisa, must yet be strong in the recollection of every one. But the consideration of these topics, and the long impeachment of Mr. Hastings which Mr. Fox took so distinguished a part in, would lead to a length which the limits that must necessarily be put to this work would not allow of.—Various opinions have been expressed of the justice of the prosecution of Mr. Hastings, and of the propriety of the motives by which the managers of that prosecution were influenced. By some writers it has been said, that Mr. Burke's zeal in the cause proceeded from feelings of personal animosity against

against the governor-general, originating in some real or pretended injury done to one of his relatives in India; and that Mr. Fox encouraged the prosecution from motives of hostility against the court of directors, who had been so instrumental in defeating his India bill, and so slavish in supporting Mr. Pitt's administration. Neither of these surmises, to the best of my judgment, have the least foundation in fact. It has fallen to my lot, with a view which it would be unnecessary here to explain, to examine, with as much attention as I could command, nearly all the voluminous documents which have appeared on the subject of this celebrated impeachment, as well those in favour, as those hostile to the governor-general, and the indelible impression I have received from them is, that never was a great state criminal prosecuted on more justifiable grounds.—The period cannot be far distant when a deceived and deluded public will be forced to give a reluctant assent to the wisdom and policy of the measures proposed by the illustrious subject of these memoirs for the salvation of the British possessions in India; to acknowledge the futility of the plans

carried into execution through the intrigues of his self-interested opponents; and to lament that the opportunity, which was afforded, by the punishment of a great delinquent, of putting some check to the endless massacres, pillage, confiscation, and robberies, that had disgraced the British name, from the first footing of our nation in Hindostan, had been lost, notwithstanding all the exertions of the ablest orators of any age or nation, by the unaccountable acquittal of Mr. Hastings *.

* It is some reproach to the literary character of the British nation, that no regular and connected account of the wars, conquests, settlements, and trade of the English East India company in Asia, has yet appeared, in any way deserving the title of history. The commerce and politics of Asia, interesting in all ages to the enlightened nations of Europe, have, in the course of the last fifty years, acquired a degree of importance, in relation to this country, unexampled in the history of the foreign conquests of any other nation. The materials for such a work are abundant, and many of them excellent; but it must be acknowledged that a vast mass of contradictory evidence exists, and it would be no easy task to elicit the truth from the jarring statements of contending parties.

Of

Of the motives of those who opposed the impeachment, or who only lent it occasionally a cold and languid support, it is not very easy to speak. Mr. Pitt appears never to have entered zealously into the business, but always to have concurred in it with reluctance. In this cause his usual ardour left him; and if the great ends of substantial justice had been obtained, they would have been obtained, if not against his inclination, certainly without his assistance. Of the motives of Mr. Dundas, the court of directors, and the whole body of Indian peculators, for opposing the prosecution, and at every turn hunting for expedients to harass the managers, and throw difficulties in the way of convicting the criminal, who, for a moment, can entertain a doubt? They were individually interested in the preservation of the corrupt administration of Indian affairs; some of them had amassed princely fortunes under the patronage of the person accused, and therefore thought themselves bound in gratitude to protect him; and others, either for themselves or their connections, ardently desired the continuance of a system so pregnant with lucrative abuses.—

abuses.—Such men as these could see in Mr. Hastings nothing but persecuted worth, honour, and integrity; and in his opponents nothing but personal animosity, ungovernable ambition, and a hateful spirit of revenge.—But impartial posterity will decide between them; and at the present day such names as Mr. Windham, Mr. Sheridan, Lord Howick, and many more who bore an arduous share in the above proceedings, must vindicate the memory of the great leaders in those transactions from all suspicion derogatory to their characters or independence.

End of the First Volume.

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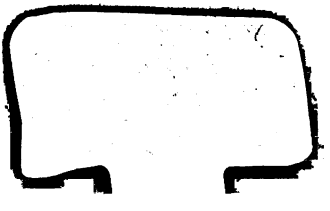
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